

# Gunsmoke

TELEVISION'S  
FAMOUS MARSHAL  
IN  
NEW ADVENTURES









# NEW STORIES of MATT DILLON

Famous Television Marshal

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# ***GunsMoke***

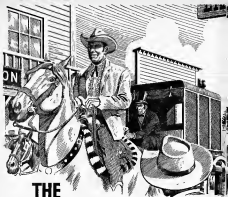


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THE

# SIXGUN REPORTER



**T**he box-like cart contained Dodge and his, sunny afternoon, driven by a small man in a black coat and moustache hat, and piloted by another man riding a large, grey, shaggy horse in flannel over to its side. He was dressed like a dude, in a well-cut, light-colored, light-weight coat, with an unbuttoned vest that did its best to contain the coat with its bright silver studs. He had black-and-grey striped trousers tucked into the top of boots that appeared to have been polished over with a black glossy paste.

Beneath the large, wide-brimmed, light-grey hat, the man's thin browned lips and steady, his smile was a flat wall, showing teeth that looked

Haggar said looked like "corral" points on a wall before the pointing had been set to them.

It was Farnes who brought the immediately dressed stranger into Matt Dillon's office. Don Adams, who sat waiting to see if there was coffee brewing, showed his amusement at the contrast between the dark stranger and the handsome face and sunny, well-known clothes of Farnes.

"Glad to see, Mr. Dillon, this type stranger does come just when needed" for you, as I figured to bring him along," said Farnes.

"Maudie Dunsbury, correspondent at large for the *Denver Times*." The stranger held out his hand to Matt as he introduced himself. "It's a pleasure and an honor to meet you, Maudie Dillon. Ah, yes, your name is not unknown in the news story, whose dependence of your low-rented adventures have found their way into the pages of the press which I have the honor to represent."

It was said with all the hollow effectiveness of a career politician trying to win votes. Matt didn't like the drumpy voice, and now he came to look at the man more closely his way decided was that he did not like the man who owned it, either. The stranger observed the smiling face, the drumpy clothes—and noted the way in a better supported by a large silver-backed gun-belt.

"Well, what can I do for you, Mr. Dunsbury?"

"A moment, sir," Dunsbury went to the door, opened, and called, "Come along in, Horner"

The small man who had been driving the box-like cart which had accompanied Dunsbury now came into Matt's office with the air of a man asking to be engaged for long.

"Allow me to present Mr. Horner Hathway, Maudie, one of the foremost photographic experts in the great country—say, in the world."

Horner Hathway gave a small smile, at which he seemed to be ashamed, for a disappointed almost before it had had time to register itself on his small-featured, close-shaven face.

"Happy to meet you, Mr. Hathway." Matt turned to Dunsbury. "Now, what can I do for you, Mr. Dunsbury?"

Dunsbury hung out an arm, and brushed himself like a record of the deeds—and and imagined—of some of the more flamboyant characters who were making history and legends in the American West. By the time he had finished, Matt gathered that he wanted to have a series of interviews with Matt, to put on record all the low-breathed Matt



and had dealings with, and how they had been captured on extensive duels with. Furthermore, he wanted Mast to pose for a series of photographs which would illustrate some of the most dramatic of his captures. These, explained the verbose Mr. Densley, with a wave of his hand, would be used for weeks back and to draw illustrations for the series of articles he would write.

Mast made no move even to consider the suggestion. He shook his head. "Sorry, Mr. Densley, the answer is no. Right now, even if I liked the idea—which I don't—I'm too busy."

Densley smiled. He had had dealings with false modesty before, and he knew how to overcome it. "Now, Marshal, do you realize that you are robbing posterity of glorious pages in the history of our great country? It is men like you that are opening up the vast, untapped lands. It is men like you that make our measures proud to be able to call ourselves citizens of these United States. Not only that—there's money in it!" He brought his frail voice to a halt to allow the effect the last remark would have on his listener. Mast eyed him without a change of expression. "Money, Marshal. Today there is a rage among all reading people, and the

things they want to read about concern the West and the men who are making it. Columns of money have been furnished—ugh, for themselves and for the men they have written about—by sending the exploits of men such as your good self."

"I'm flattered that you think me worthy of highlighting amongst such company, but the answer is still no."

Densley smiled to itself, but made no further attempt to persuade Mast. He said, "Well, I don't give up now, Marshal. Maybe I'll drop by some other time. Good-bye, Doctor!"

They left, Mast holding the door open for them. He stood there in the doorway for a few moments. Then he said, "Well, all's that don't hurt all." Trying to look completely nonchalant and disinterested, he walked slowly out of the door, which he realized to close behind him.

Doc Adams rose from his seat and shut the door. "My guess is that before sundown, Presto will have got the words on my readers' heads."

Mast guessed. "Presto knows how far he can push the law?"

"Just so long as he don't want no hand and that it seems to point in his hands," screamed Doc,





For two days citizens of Dodge saw Sheriff Deaseley taking photographs of the town.

stirring them again and burying his face in his coat.

For the next two days, the citizens of Dodge were regaled with the sight of Hector Harkway taking photographs of different parts of the town. He was made rightly up when Hector looked like. He always had his head buried under the black cloth which covered the back of the big camera, which stood on a tripod.

Watching him and the laborious preparations that had to be made to take a photograph, Doc said, "Danged if I couldn't draw some of them places just as quick as it takes him to make one of them photographs!"

In the Longbranch Saloon and in Ross Williams Deaseley made himself popular by standing drinks and listening to tell them tall stories told to him by the town boys. From this small group Fenney Haggen was never far away.

The third day after their arrival, the town like one which cannot Harkway's cumbersome apparatus for photographing and developing hatched out of town, with Deaseley riding his survey grey and stuffing his hat in all the holes on the boardwalk.

Doc, standing with Matt just outside the Har-

shall's office, shook his head. "For a dollar they don't get up too easy, our friends certainly work poor for his last camera very strong," he said. "Wonder where he's moving on to now?"

"Just as long as he doesn't hang around trying to drum up old stories or tag my name to I don't give a damn," answered Matt. "You seen those paper books he was telling about? I can see a white back strap at Abilene. It 'ud make any man west of the Mississippi lift his face to shame. The less they write, and make our towns be the cruder!"

Two hours later Fenney burst in on Matt as he was finishing some paper work. Fenney looked even more dejected than usual, and the corners of his lip-tremored but had two dark holes through at-holes that were not there when Matt last saw his last in it. One hole was in the floor, the other in the back, both made by the same bullet.

"Hatched, come quick! About two miles out on the Chisholm Trail they's backtracking that damn Mr. Deaseley! He's taking off like a red fire of snakes, but he ain't been out much longer!" Fenney pulled out a kerchief that had once been red with a white strip near the edge, but which was now



Matt races the two men before they reach it.

disengaged from both of contact with water, and stopped his feet. He was turning rapidly toward the door as he did so. "C'mon, Marshall, c'm!" Fergus spoke with more urgency than Matt had ever heard him use before as he moved rapidly out of the door.

Matt bent down and picked up the object that had fallen from Fergus's pocket as he pulled out the Revolver. It had fallen on a small rug Miss Kray had warned would make the Marshall's office look like the rest of the cells in the back of the building, and had made no sound. Matt slipped it into his own pocket, and buckled on his gun belt.

Out at the hitching rail, Fergus's snap-buckled mule stood there patiently. Matt aimed his spurs as he saw Fergus on the back of a horse, impatiently waiting for him.

"C'mere Kib, Marshall! It's us don't get up there. . . ." He didn't finish.

The dust from their horses' hooves still lay suspended in the air when they were more than a mile from town. About four miles farther on Fergus slowed down, and finally brought his horse to a halt. Ahead of them they could have imagined them.

Fergus stopped his dog. "His run is holding 'em off."

Matt asked, "They got him unhitched?"

"As pretty as unhooked as I ever seen, Mr' Dillon, though, he's law-abiding, I don't mean ever seeing."

"Then here's where we had better split, leave the trail, and walk our way round to the flanks and surprise 'em," said Matt. "I'll take the right-hand side of the trail; you take the left. Keep under cover. Don't make a move until you hear my signal—shoot quick partners."

"Yes, sir, Marshall."

Fergus headed his animal off the track and wound his way among boulders and scrub at the side of the trail. Matt walked his horse to the right, meeting in a wide, right-handed arc.

The lying, serpentine with fairly long intervals between the round of each shot, grew closer as Matt edged his horse through the scrub. He dismounted when he had completed about half the arc he planned to cover. He moved forward cautiously on foot. He saw the first of the laid-up men crouching behind a rock. There were two of them, and both of them covered the lower parts of their faces. The man

swear to Matt raised his gun and fired into the air.

Matt was close enough to hear the second man say, his voice muffled because of the larched, "If Marshal Dillon don't come get here we'll have run plumb out of ammunition."

The second man lowered his gun and said, "I'm just a man worried that the Marshal will come in here to find and ask questions after."

"That's a risk we gotta take."

Matt was on the one man before they knew it. Their hands clamped together and they clamped weapons on each other's arms when they met.

Matt realized they would stop that way for at least ten minutes, by which time he ought to be able to deal with the rest of the bandits. He removed the larched, and saw Charlie Fay and Henry Champ Houston—two Dodge layabouts who were too lazy to chop wood to make a fire to sit by on a winter night.

Twenty minutes later he had five more of Dodge City's lesser citizens trussed in a bundle, having dealt with them in much the same way. He gathered their horses, latched to bushes around the outside area, and along the unlit road were upon the saddle of the six horses. Then, keeping close of the trail and the two-like out which he had seen from a number of vantage-points of the trail, he rode back to Dodge City. He was not surprised that Farns Haggan had not been among the men who were "unlatching." Marcus Doolery had his photographs.

Before they reached Dodge, the "bandits" had come round, bewildered at finding themselves along across their saddles and tied hand and foot. They were even more dependent when Matt latched them all over the side, telling them grimly that a charge of strapped highway robbery would be laid against them.

It was a race between them as to who should ask Matt and tell Matt what he already knew—that Farns had put up the idea to Doolery to get Matt out into prison, so that Highway could take some photographs to send back and to substantiate any stories that Doolery could so send.

Matt latched them out, grunted, but when Doc came by he was smiling. By the time he had finished telling the Doc what had happened, both of them were chuckling richly.

Doc wiped his eyes and said, "I suppose Farns

was sitting all nice and comfortable in that box-car while all this was going on. I wonder how long it took them to discover that the outside was no longer cut." He chuckled again. "It's the justice, though I've had a month of bandits. You mean to put Farns with the others when he gets back to town?"

"By rights he should end his time in the cells for a couple of weeks—substantiating an officer of the law—and Doolery and Highway with him. But I guess the two strangers will high-tail it out of the area once they realize their little game's been exposed, and Farns will low-tail it back here and hope he doesn't bump into me for two-three days."

"I sure would have liked to have seen their faces when they found the outside had got tied and gone home—or here riding." Doc was still chuckling as he walked across the street to his supply. Thereafter he was back. "One thing puzzles me, Matt. You acted all along as if you knew what was happening."

Matt smiled. "As I did, Farns, Farns comes in here with his rifle, cracks his gun, pulls out a larched, and what is a gold dollar, which he didn't notice fall because it landed on the rug. Now, Farns never did enough work in a whole year to earn a gold dollar. Then he doesn't see his mate to ride out, but a horse from the livery stable. Now, the livery stable don't like horses out for nothing, and Farns ordinarily would rather walk than pay money to ride on a horse. One thing and another, I was pretty sure Farns thought he was on in a way of getting hold of a few easy dollars."

Doc nodded very, grinning. "I better go and visit him a while for when he gets back. All that chinking he's done will have plumb worn him out."

Must be the boys go the following morning, having fixed each of them the gold dollar they had as their portion. Farns had not shown up by mid-morning, but the horse he had hired was brought into town by Clint Martin, who had found the animal lurching by the side of the road some seven miles out of Dodge. There was blood blood on the saddle leather and saddle bags. That was why Clint brought the horse in Matt.

Matt found the spot where the horse had been found, and it was easy to trace the trail of its lurching. Somewhere, not far away, Farns had been shot from his horse—or wounded and fallen from the saddle.

Mar's first object was to try and locate him, then the search would be on for the newspaperman who carried a shotgun. It seemed fairly obvious who had happened. Dunlavy had accused Fenne of doublecrossing him when, under the "mask" men see Matt himself had appeared. There had been a quarrel, because Dunlavy had paid out gold for the story he had set up and was asking for his money.

Matt felt responsible for whatever had happened to Fenne.

Suddenly he relaxed in. On a rock, low enough for a man to lean against or sit on, there were traces of blood. He dismounted and searched the ground heavily for a foot mark, but it was rocky, and there was nothing to be seen.

Matt started to walk in even-swinging circles around the rock. There would be such somewhere near. He stopped suddenly, and swung round. Faintly over the still morning air came the sound of a voice. Matt stretched to listen. Someone was talking. The voice was a little weak, maybe, but the words came clearly to Matt.

"Gentle-m, horse-mank and pool of greasy grease . . ."

The next three about Mar's face relaxed a little. He listened the sound of the voice, and came upon Fenne lying with his back against a rock as a small deer. There was dead blood from a gash on his forehead, and Fenne had bound his terrified eyes; a wound in his thigh. He was pale, and the smile on his face looked grim.

He smiled, a little weakly, as he saw Mar. "Hi, Marshall! Gosh! Well, I just knowed somehow you'd find me. Tired as get me to the side of the trail to make it easy for you, but this little ol' scoundrel of a dog would just wouldn't let me make it."

"You've lost a lot of blood, Fenne. I better get you back to camp, and then ride out and find Dunlavy."

"You sure got to do that, Mr' Dolan."

Matt's eyes were blank. "He won't be waiting any more till later for a few years. Amstrop murder runs a long time in jail."

Fenne pushed himself up a little. "But it wasn't him that at all, Marshall. He didn't gas me. Now, he was sure sure when all the action did stop and we had them pikeers had still back to me. 'Crossed me of double-crossing him. Well, while we was a-sit-ting by the cart, throwing words, there

fellers come along. Kardshek over there from him like the boys from here. We figured they was the boys from here. But no, see—these fellows were for real. They had an odd about we could do anything. They took what money there was. Say, Marshall, isn't this my luck? I reckoned to be robbed of a golden dollar or had in with your's pocket, and—Gosh! Well—of's. I just plain—lost it!" Then they starts to talk' what a good cover the two-men would be for a bank hold-up they was planned in Alaska. Well, just about then I made a dive for my gun they took. Guess I was too slow—got me a bullet in the leg. But I made my best, started to ride like fury and come of' alone. Then except all these there they dead at me as I was riding out one of them little ol' scounders ground with head—made me sit down. But I managed to stick to the saddle, and . . . well, I threw myself to the dirt. The horse had gone, and I digger of's. I don't want to lose more blood than I got. I'd better get me to Dodge . . . but this was it for as I could make it!"

When Matt got Fenne back to Doc Adams's surgery, Doc shook his head over him. "Working you do runs the way you want it, darn it, Fenne! Doggone!"

Matt left Doc wondering about the better things to do than bind up both wounds that no good boys were got themselves, and none were rode out along the Chinleka trail.

He had little difficulty in finding the cart. The reins had tumbled off the trail towards the west, leading to the general direction of Alaska. Fenne had told him there were four of them, and Mar's big problem was to catch up with them, before they decided, as they surely would, that Dunlavy and Halfway were conspirators to be put out of as quickly as possible.

From a rise about a mile further on, Matt looked down into a shallow valley where a small stream flowed with cattails bowed. The rebar had fallen there. The two-men horses had been ridden down the shafts and were tethered to a tree near the stream. The two other horses were tethered near by. Two spurs appeared close to each other some five yards away from where four others sat in the shade of the big oaks.

Matt dismounted and used the cover of rocks and scrub to make his way down to the floor of the valley. He got within twenty yards of the camp fire,



The Colt in the rubber-band spot is the pistol in Mar's gun belt

separated the two figures sitting apart from the rest. Duxbury and Hartway had their arms tied behind their backs and stretched around the waist of two captives. Duxbury was talking.

"But, look, boys," he was saying, "let me write about you . . . make you famous back east—make you rich from the sale of the stories I'll write with you as the heroes . . . real names—everything . . . how you rescued me and my friend from bandits . . . how you stopped them from robbing the bank at Abilene. There's fortunes to be made out of this kind of writing. There's no risk. You kill me and my friend, and every town west of the Mississippi will be guessing for you."

One of the men looked up from the tin plate from which he was sipping beans in silent protest. "Yeah, but robbing a bank is aw. We got the money aw. You say you can't pay us until you write the stories and sell 'em. How do we know we shall ever get our money?"

Duxbury was silent for a few moments, then he said, "But I know there's only one thing you're going to do to my friend and me, but do me a favor

first, will you? Let me write the story of what happened to me . . . I'll not write names . . . but let me put down as writing what it's like to be taken by robbers, robbed . . . and then be left waiting for money back. Let me just do that, did? Can't hurt you any."

The men laughed. "How'd you get your story to them printing folks? Nah, maybe it wouldn't do us any harm. Wouldn't do us no good, neither."

The man who had spoken wiped his mouth on his sleeve, and stood up, loosening the gun in his holster as he did so. "No, no more. You've given us a good story with this here cat for what we plan to do. Now you know too much . . . and you can't do us no good." He slid his gun from his holster, looking with cold, impersonal eyes to where both Hartway seemed to be trying to square himself into a hole in the ground. "The lady one first," he said.

From just beyond Hartway Mar's gun belt. The Colt in the band of the rubber spot in the ground, and he stood looking rapidly at his chartered fingers.



"Behave, your excellency," ordered Hector.

The other men were on their feet in a second, hands reaching towards their right thighs. It was then Mart stepped from cover, his gun embracing them all with its one blank, bored eye. They froze, and then, after a second or two, three pairs of hands slowly rose straight.

Mart threw a look at the feet of the greatest villain, "Behave your excellency," he told him.

The man bent solemnly to do as he was told. Suddenly he straightened, and the look flew towards Mart in an accusing aim. Mart flung himself to one side, and as the man with arms raised, the man leaped forward at him. Mart's swinging gun caught him on the side of the head, and the man slumped to the ground with a grunt.

The remaining bandit, and the man whose fingers had been damaged by Mart's bullet, stayed where they were. Keeping them covered, Mart found his hands and cut the captive free.

Dawley was grinning widely as he remarked and added his own: "What a story! I've seen it with my own eyes. If only Dawley could have set up his equipment! Maribel, you wouldn't see to . . . ?" He looks off at the sight of Mart's blank eye. "No, I guess you wouldn't. But it's all stored in my head. I'll write such a story as never came out of the West."

"Mount up and ride back to Dodge with me," said Mart dryly. "I'll want your testimony in writing for the circuit judge."

Two days later, Doc Adams brought his buggy

to sudden halt in the street right opposite Mart's office. Mart stood in the doorway, his limbs being arranged in an unusual, pseudo-luxurious pose by a beaming Maribel Dawley. In the road, he stood under the black cloak of the camera on its tripod, was Hector Hathway.

"That's it, Maribel. Hold it right there! Right, Hector?"

"Right!" came the muffled voice of Hathway. The little man removed the cap from the lens, held it away for a few seconds, and then replaced it. His head came out from beneath the black cloak as Dawley grabbed Mart's hand and shook it enthusiastically.

"Thanks, Maribel. That will go well with my story. And you can't stop me writing this and life the truth!"

The two-car, with Hathway at the reins, moved slowly out of town, preceded by the shiny grey, with Dawley riding, smiling his under smile, and jolting his hat to the ladies on the boardwalk.

Don's jaw had dropped. He disconnected and walked over to Mart. "Thompson, Mart!" he said. "I thought you swore you'd never let that man make a picture out of you! I thought you couldn't stand the sight of him!"

Mart smiled grimly. "Believe me I," he said, "was a man who can quite coolly sit as he allowed to write about his own murder, so that he does what he sees is his duty as his newspaper must have something worthwhile about him, I guess."



# THE VENGEANCE TRAIL

**M**ART read the letter, written laboriously and misspelled, again. It read, Sam, This is just to let you see I am due out for release on such such month. This is also to let you see I am coming for you, vengeance your my brother or not. What you did to me no man would if done to another man, let alone one brother to another. I'm coming for you, Sam. Your going to pay for what you did to me. Your brother Bill.

Marshal Matt Dillon looked down at Bill Parker,

twelve-year-old son of Sam Parker. The boy looked up at the lawman, as if he would read in his eyes the solution to the terrible problem which had so suddenly confronted him.

"You can stop him, can't you, Marshal? I guess Uncle Will's sick from being in prison. For never done him no harm, Marshal."

"Does your paw know you're shooting me this time, Bill?"

The boy shook his head. "Gaw. He'd leather me

if he knew. He says he can deal with Uncle Walt when the time comes. But that means, Marled . . . it's kinda bad, isn't it? Now says Uncle Walt deserved what punishment he got. And now he's paid the price. Now is all set to let Uncle Walt start again with us on the farm. Right him a partner, Paw said. Now Uncle Walt says he's coming with a gun for my gun. Oh, yeah, Marled, isn't it enough I can't get no more?"

Bill laughed at him and pushed them to his eyes as they took the train.

"Where did you find the letter, Bill?"

"In the box where Paw keeps all his legal papers—books in the firm and such like. When that letter came, Paw clamped—look to me like a gun. I never seen him with a gun strapped to him before, Marled. You can stop my Uncle Walt from killing my gun, can't you?"

Marled nodded slowly, a far-away look in his eyes as he stared out of the window of the Parker homestead, over the lush valley-meadows, draped with cottonwood down by the creek. He knew the Parker story, how Sam Parker's violence against his youngest brother had born the curse of Walt's long conviction of manslaughter and being sent to Leavenworth Prison for fifteen years. Walt had been lucky that the conviction had not been for murder.

Now, on your head goes by, and Walt was due out on parole. Ten years of his life had been spent between the walls of a prison. Walt would be maybe thirty or thirty-one now, if Marled's remembrance of what he had read in the files of the case was correct.

Maybe the man Walt killed deserved to die, but Walt hadn't given him a chance to draw his gun. Two other people had seen the killing—Old Jake Harawa, who died three years ago, and Sam Parker. Old Jake had said he saw Barton, the man Walt shot down, draw first. Sam, under oath, had finally admitted that his youngest brother had, without warning, pulled his gun and shot Barton through the back.

Old Jake had been scared by Barton, who had also tricked Walt out of a big parcel of land. The judge took that into consideration, both when sentencing the result of the witness, and in passing sentence on Walt.

The exact lines of the law was not always allowed to go down back where often a gun did justice—

even if it paid no attention to the law. On Sam's evidence, a charge of murder should have been preferred, but it had been proved that Barton had helped and helped more than one or two men in the territory. The judge felt justice would be served by compromising and calling it manslaughter. The wisdom of the sentence perhaps measured how very near to murder it was.

If Sam, honest and upright, had been able to stretch the truth, his brother would have walked out of the court a free man. Knowing Sam Parker now, Marled could realize the terrible struggle he must have had within himself before he went to the stand to testify against his younger brother. Truth was what Sam lived by. How it seemed that truth was what he was going to die by, and at the hands of his own brother.

Marled looked down to see Bill's eyes fixed on him. He recalled the youngster's face. "Well, Bill, there's only one way I can make sure your paw stays short until I can get to talk to your Uncle Walt. I can't sit out here at the firm until he shows up. There's too much work to do in Dodge and around-down. Paw you didn't had that letter sooner. . . it was the weekend preceding. It'll take Walt maybe two or three days to make the trip. He might make it sooner. Listen, Bill, I want you to ride into Dodge. Go to Mr. Smalley's boarding-house, and tell her I sent you. I want you to stay there for three or four days."

"But Paw . . . Uncle Walt . . . ?"

"Don't argue with me, Bill, just do as I say. Pickle up and get out of here before your paw comes back from his work. You want me to help you. Well, this is the first thing you've got to do before I can help you. I came at night when I got your message, without saying. You do the same for me now."

Five minutes later Marled reached the big ride towards Dodge, then he settled himself to wait for Sam to return. Two hours later the older Parker walked in the subbuildings near the homestead. He was looking a little, from the back of which were slung two road-ricks.

Sam settled when he saw Marled, a smile that came unwillingly to his set, weary face. Marled was surprised to see the difference in the man. The brother had unsettled and upset him.

"What brings you out here, Marled?"

"Just a little business, Sam."



"Well, come on into the house. Night as well join us in a beer or so. Now, that boy of mine anywhere about? Ain't often he's missing some good time."

"I won't come as yet now, Sam, but I'd very much appreciate it if you would ride into Dodge with me. Got some papers for you to sign."

"Papers? What papers?"

"Your brother's due out of prison—on parole. Some like you to his next-of-kin have got to sign a guarantee of his good behavior."

"Duggan as, Matt? I'm a busy man. Couldn't you have brought them with you?"

"Have would—except that your signature has got to be witnessed by an independent person, that is, I can't witness your signature, and you'll need a responsible person to do so on a legal document and you can't find one out here. No, Sam, I'm afraid it's got to be you that has to lose working time."

"I thought anybody over twenty-one—no long as they can read or write—could act as witness to a signature on a document?"

Matt smiled. "Certainly, yes, but this is rather a special legal document. Responsible proof, it says. Well, the only people who ain't doing any-

thing and could afford the time to ride out here with me are the few layabouts we've got in Dodge. And if the law investigated their ability to witness a legal document like this. . . ." Matt shook his head.

Sam Parker smiled. "I'll saddle up and be with you in five minutes," he said.

As they rode back to Dodge, Sam said, "How come they want me to guarantee my brother's good behavior while he's on parole? I never been in touch with anybody at Lawrenceville."

Matt said, "Guess they gave your name as the next-of-kin and so being the person he was going to live with."

Sam shrugged. The lines at the side of his mouth were deeply etched, now. "Ain't my brother's keeper!" he growled.

"Guess that is in this case you are, Sam."

As they walked into Matt's office, Sam said, "Well, Matt, let's get those papers out and the responsible witness. Where are they?"

"Right here, Sam," said Matt, rifling around nothing.

There was just time for a surprised expression to flick into Sam's eyes before Matt's fist caught him squarely on the jaw. Then the eyes glazed over as he slumped towards the floor.



Matt's fist caught him squarely on the jaw

Must ought him before he let the boards. "I sure am sorry to have to do this to you, Sam—on top of telling you a heap of what he's in."

Sam started the unassuming farmer into one of the cots, laid him on the bed, and locked the iron grill on him. Then he went to find Peter Haggan. When he came back, Sam had regained consciousness. He sat in the bed, his head in his hands. He looked up with black eyes at Matt, came and stood on the other side of the bed.

"Maybe you got a room for that fellow," Sam said, his voice grating. "But you'll have to give it to him first. When I get out of here . . ."

"Take it easy, Sam. Right now you'd you could break me in small pieces and not me in further for your land. Tomorrow, the day after maybe, you may see it in a different light."

"Tomorrow, the day after? What about my boy? What about the work on my land?"

"Well, all right. He's with his family for a couple of days, and Peter Haggan will run your stock, wanted and fed."

Sam rose from the bed and came to the grill. "This is about Walt, isn't it, fellow? I get it, now. Young Bill found his letter to me—came running to me. I'll run the knife off him for that."

"Sure, run the knife off him—and thank the Lord you're able to do it. That man from Walt, like Bill said, read back that."

"I can handle Walt. You got no right to interfere."

"You got every right, Sam—positive custody. There was no other way of getting you into the cot. I'm sorry I had to do it the way I did."

"That is a matter between Walt and me. Nothing to do with you."

"There doesn't a chance of bad lying that it's got a lot to do with me. One of my jobs, part of my job—maybe the most important part, though I don't get much of a chance to do it—is to prevent crime. Right now I'm doing all I know to do just that. As I see it, as things stand between you and Walt, one of you is set to die, and the other is set to hang for the killing. That leads young Bill out on a limb, doesn't it?"

Sam went back and sat on the edge of the bed. "Maybe you're doing the according to your lights, fellow, but I tell you this, whenever the outcome of this business—if I'm still alive—I'll make you answer for what you've done to me!"

Matt smiled rapidly, and turned away. Now it was a question of waiting. The way from Lawrence to the Potter farm—if Walt took the most direct trail—led through Dodge. It might be that Walt would avoid the town, and ride straight to the farm. It made no difference; he'd find no one there. After waiting a while, he would ride back to Dodge to find out where his brother had gone, if he could. Sometimes—or might be sometimes, it might be a week ahead—he would come, weary-eyed, lower in mind and heart, looking for his brother to kill him. If he succeeded, Bill would be an orphan, and Walt would swing at the end of a rope. He would swing at the end of a rope because of all the business that had come into him during those ten years he had spent in Lawrenceville.

It was two days before the rail scraper, looking whipped and strong and fit as he rode into town, made his appearance. Matt had never seen Walt Potter, but there was sufficient likeness between the rail scraper and Sam for him to be certain that Walt Potter had arrived.

Matt watched him back his horse to the post outside the Longbranch. He saw him push his way into a thoughtful atmosphere through the hawking doors. Then Matt walked slowly to the Longbranch himself, and sat at a table near the rail-scraper door.

Walt stood at the counter, watching the bar-keep serve his drink. Matt studied him. He was tall, a good six inches taller than his brother, and thin. He had not an ounce of superfluous fat on him; he looked all muscle, and he looked strong—not with the strength of weights and bulk, but with the strength of finely tempered steel. Ten years in prison, where they worked a man hard, fed him adequately but not too well and allowed no drinking and no smoking, would make a long-term of Walt's age a fit, strong man. Walt would bring a cold business, a hard and maybe a ruthless disregard for feelings of any sort.

Matt heard him asking questions about Sam and the farm. Had he left? Had he sold up? The younger Potter had obviously bypassed Dodge entirely, to ride straight to the farm. The men now or at the counter were unable to help him with his inquiries, for the simple reason that they did not positively know the answers. They believed Potter hadn't sold up or moved out of the territory, but they wasn't sure.



"Don't make me use it, Parker," Mort said softly.

Mort eased himself out of his chair, and walked slowly to where Walt was leaning on the counter. Mort tossed his own belt against the woodwork.

"You looking for Sam Parker?"

Walt turned his head slowly at Mort's voice, and took in the Martini's badge on his vest. Deliberately he turned his head again and spat on the woodwork.

"Whoever I'm looking for, lawman, ain't none of your business."

Two or three men at the bar eased themselves away, aware to safety from flying bullets as they heard the cracked insistence of the voice directed towards Mort.

Mort smiled thinly. "Maybe it is my business," he said softly. "Walt Parker, isn't it? How'd you like to ride out of town before your saddle has time to cool, Walt?"

Parker gulped his drink, and slid the glass towards the bartender. Without looking at Mort he said, "How'd you like to try and make out?"

The bar near Mort and Walt Parker, and the men behind and in front of them, suddenly became vacant. This was gun-silk, and the tall, hard-eyed stranger looked as if he would go for his gun with the same unhesitating readiness that he would break a fly short his dream.

"I reckon I can do just that," said Mort.

"I've got business here. When I've done that I'll leave, and not before."

"You'll leave when I say so. I know what your business is," Mort dropped his voice so that only Parker could hear what he was saying. "I know you're out of Lawrenceville on parole. Killing your brother ain't going to solve any problems—it's just going to put a rope round your neck this time."

"If they catch me," There was a cracked note in the voice. "Then has come something to you, has he? Guess I should have known he'd do that. I shouldn't have worried him I was coming, but I wanted him to come soon. I'd have liked to make him sweat for ten years, but I can't wait that long." Parker turned slowly to face Mort. "So you know where Sam is. Maybe I can persuade you to tell me."

The man's head made a lightning movement towards his holster, but by the time his gun was only halfway free he found himself looking down the muzzle of Mort's.

"Don't make me use it, Parker," Mort said softly. "I can't aim from this angle."

Parker's gun slid back in his holster. "You can't aim out of mine. I've done nothing."

"You were about to draw a gun on an officer of the law. That's reason enough for me to put a man



*A goodly few. Marshall Parker grinds through the barling crew.*

on people in a cell and keep him there until the devilish judge comes round. Then you'd have the other five years to do, plus some more besides."

The eyes with which Parker looked at Dillon were dead; the mouth stretched in a cruel, smile.

"So you can run me out of Dodge, but you've got no legal right to run me out of the saloon. I've earned one year to settle accounts with my brother. I can wait a little bit longer."

Matt's smile had an increased expression of intention enough about it. "You jailbirds are all the same," he said, "full of bluster and big talk until someone a better man—stands up to you. They would have done better to bring you to the end of a rope after you shot down that other feller in cold blood."

This mention of the tale of Parker's jaw frightened. "Big talk!" he said softly. "Without that gun your talk wouldn't be so big."

Matt said, "You wouldn't like to try and back up that statement? All right, jailbird. Drop your gunbelt to the floor."

Parker hesitated.

"You heard me?" Matt's voice was a whiplash.

Now, and his gun jerked forward as quick as old feet to his side.

Quickly, with all the bitterness that had grown in his heart over the years flashing his eyes with a killer look, Parker undid his gunbelt. It fell to the floor. "However I killed Burton—and he deserved to die—I've paid for it. You're still talking big because I lost a gun." The clunk of the gun on the floor punctuated the first statement he spoke.

Matt kicked the belt to the far side of the room. Then he did his gun back into the holster, and undid the gunbelt. He dropped it over the other side of the counter.

"All right," he said. "Now let's see who talks the biggest—without a gun."

Now crowded the entrance to the Longreach. "I won't permit Marshal Dillon into this bar tonight," said Red Kliney. "Just like he was deliberately coming up the stairs for a fight."

Parker started in, by suddenly swinging a chair at Matt's head. Matt ducked and brought his foot to the pit of Parker's stomach, where it landed on two hard muscles, bringing only a groan.

They traded punches, they crashed into tables

and broke them; they kicked chairs from out of their way. Father threw a bottle at Matt, it glanced against his cheek, breaking the skin. A punch from Matt sent Father sprawling through the doorway doors, and returned the same specimen who had pained them. Matt followed, and they both walked in the dust of the street, surrounded by an ever-growing audience. They got to their feet, rubbed punches again. Father sent Matt into the dust with a blow to the side of the head. Pulling himself to his feet, Matt hammered his fist between Father's eyes, and the tall young man staggered back to fall and clump against the rear of the board walk.

When they had been fighting for nearly thirty minutes, Matt, through his one good eye and his half-closed left eye, recognized that there was less manueuvre about the lines of Father's fist, and he saw that the killer look in the cold eye was not so much of a killer look now; the eye seemed to be less cold.

There was a moment when Matt could have landed a blow which would have put Father down for good. The crowd cheered the man to go on, but Matt flushed the punch, and in the moment's respite Father shook his way back into his head, and lunged forward fighting again.

For another fifteen minutes the two men struggled and fought, punching and working in the dust, with, finally, Doc Adams, riding back to town from one of his country calls, over the street they were in, and above his small figure in between them.

"What in creation do you think you're doing, Dillies? Are you both trying to kill each other?" He gave them a push in opposite directions, and they had taken so much out of each other that they staggered back, helpless to go on.

The crowd of men standing round cheered the doc

—and they cheered the men who had done the fighting. Dodge city had seldom seen such a battle.

"For a lawman," Doc said evenly to Matt, "you set a galvanized good example." He turned to Father. "And as for you, young man—you're a stranger round here, otherwise I guess you wouldn't have been so galvanized foolishly as to tangle with Marshal Dillon."

Matt glanced towards Walt Parker. What he saw made it veritable that he had done the fight when he could have ended it twenty minutes before Doc came along. Walt Parker was swelling—through out and swollen lips—and from when Matt could see of his eye beneath the apparent swelling surrounding them the killer look had gone.

Doc said, "You better both come to my surgery. I got some stuff to put on those cuts and bruises."

Matt and Parker walked down the outside steps of Doc's surgery together.

"Uh, Marshal, will you tell my brother? That knee I wrote . . . I guess I was sick on the head to have written it . . . a man maybe does a lot of wrong thinking when he gets to out-punching himself too much. Tell him . . . tell him there ain't no more bitterness in me. Tell him I'm going to look out on the country west of here. Maybe I'll find me a spread, and then one of these days, if he's still of the same mind, maybe I could come back and join up with him again."

They had reached the hitching rail outside the Longbranch. Walt Parker climbed nifty into the saddle, and Matt handed up his pistols to him, leaving them in from the barkeep, who had brought it out to them.

Parker turned his horse towards the trail to the west. "Don't forget, Marshal," he said. "Tell Sam I ain't got no more bitterness in me. Tell him I punched it all out of myself—and show him just how to prove I did it."

Matt smiled, and waved at the pair. He watched Parker's horse for some towards the edge of town. Then he felt a tug at his sleeve. It was the barkeep.

"About them broken bottles, Marshal . . . gee, but someone's got to pay for them."

Matt kept the smile on his open rim time—he didn't hurt their way. And he said, "Well, I guess Uncle Sam won't mind paying for those bottles, Joe. After all, we just saved him the cost of maybe a man in jail for another month—or hanging him."



Joe shows himself between them

**GUNSMOKE** by HARRY BISHOP

# THUNDER IN THE HILLS

AN EXCITING NEW STORY OF MARSHAL HATTI BILSON  
IN A DRAUGHTY ENCOUNTER WITH A SAVAGELY CRUEL  
CRIMINAL "THUNDER IN THE HILLS"









# THUNDER IN THE HILLS





# THUNDER IN THE HILLS















# THUNDER IN THE HILLS



# A BULLET for MATT DILLON



It was a soft-voiced bullet Marshal Matt Dillon held in the palm of his hand. It was the fourth one he had received through the United States mail in so many months. They had reached him in small packages with no tags, and they had come from various places west of the Missouri.

The latest had come from Maude, a town not far from Dodge City. This one had travelled the shortest distance. Apart from all the letters he had received being as anonymous, they had one other thing in common—all of them had had the letter "D" cut into the soft lead.

He stared at the bullet reflectively. "D" stood for Dillon. His name was on the bullet. Offhand, Matt could think of a score of desperadoes he had been responsible for sending to prison who would be happy to see him dug over the earth at Fort Hill. But whether when it came to a confrontation they would turn the gun to try and get him down was another matter.

Thousand men live long, and Matt had been shot down often enough. Somehow, though, that was different. There seemed to be a deadly single-mindedness about this threat. There were no bombastic words, no angry threats—just a blunt letter with Matt's name carved on it. And the places they had come from had been more to Dodge with each succeeding bullet.

He stared the lead in the air and caught it. He looked at it again, then slipped it into his vest pocket. He pushed himself up out of his chair behind the desk in his office. It was time to be over at the Longhorns. Doc Adams would be waiting there for him, and Doc would get irritable if he was kept waiting for his feed.

He stepped out on to the boardwalk, where a small, tanned hulkier creature was him. Young Jed Houser had been running fall-ride for the Marshal's office.

Matt reached out and caught him before he had time to bounce back on the boardwalk.

The boy's face was white and contorted as he looked up at Matt, and a few pale stars had pearly rimmed at the hazy ring.

"Well, now, Jed, what seems to be the hurry—huh, huh?"

"There's trouble out at the ranch, Mr. Dillon. Few men are so thick you. Come as quick as you can, he told me to say." The boy spoke palely, nervously and frightened.

"Wasn't afraid!" Matt was already walking towards where his horse was hitched.

"I don't know, Mr. Dillon. I've met me at the door of the house as I was coming in and told me to ride to Dodge for you. He was very white, and his hands were trembling. I ain't never seen Paw's hands tremble before."

"Go on over to the Longhorn, Jed. See Miss Kitty. Tell her I asked for you to bring your dinner with her. Then you rest up awhile. And don't worry. I'm on my way."

Matt took the Cherokee trail out of Dodge, and two miles from town branched off on the trail leading to Horsethroat Creek.

The Horsethroat ranch was small, but Ed Houston and his wife Betty were hard workers. There was room for expansion, and Matt figured that in four or five years' time, if things went as he thought, Ed would have doubled the size of his ranch. He had a good name among the buyers. His cattle were always in prime condition, and he had a happy family—young Jed, well along, and a daughter, Sue, who was five or six months. He and Betty worked the ranch themselves, so there were no labor problems—they might come later, when he expanded.

What trouble could have hit him so suddenly and with such devastating effect?

There was no sign of any trouble as Matt approached the small, well-built and attractive ranch-house. Choked, packed among the trees in and around the neighborhood, a horse volunteered from the small corral.

Matt dismounted there, and hitched his horse to the rail. The two horses inside the corral came over inquisitively. Matt turned towards the house.

Ed Houston had come out, and now he stood in the camp, his face drawn and white. Matt was shocked at the change in the man.

"What's the trouble, Ed?"

"No trouble, Dillon. Everything's just the same. Drop your gun-belt, and then, turn around slowly with your hands high."

The man was harsh—and it came from behind Matt.

Houston said, his voice dry, "I'm sorry, Matt. He's got Betty and Sue. . . ."

"Show your teeth, mister. And, Dillon, you're not doing as I said. I don't want you against the law now, but if you don't do as I say, you'll be dead within five seconds."

Matt let his gun-belt slide to the dust at his feet. Then he raised his hands and turned around slowly.

A tall, lean man, with a long, drawn-in face, stood in the shadow of the house, a forty-five held in a bony hand and pointing steadily at Matt. He could have been anything from the age of 45 to 60, and Matt, he mind flashing back to try and recall the fact, knew that he had never seen him before. If he had, he would have never forgotten. The man was almost grotesque in his character and his height.

"Don't leave me, do you, Dillon? The inquiry, lawyer, law lawyer! Marched Dillon, the good man. How many men you want to justice, lawyer? How many men's necks you put a noose around? How many men's lives you destroyed? Ed? Can't count 'em, can you, Marched Dillon?"

A child's voice, coming from the depths of the house, cried out in fright. The man turned his head slightly, still keeping his eyes and his gun



Matt let his gun-belt slide to the dust

freely crossed on Matt, and called over his shoulder: "I told you to keep the best quiet in door. Do you want to be a toddler?"

Matt bowed Betty Howland's suit worn coming back. Behind him Ed Howland groaned.

Matt said, "I've never seen you in my life, stranger. What kind are you doing you?"

"Oh, not me, mister. You ain't done no good harm to me. I mean, you never told me to prison."

"What's your name?"

"That I should told you. Croyton—Phil Croyton."

Matt's mind flashed back, trying to recall the name.

"You raised my life, Dillon. Starts up my family. I got nothing to live for because of you. You've given me years of misery. Before you die—death won't be all that long now—I am to give you back some of that misery. Maybe then, back before I sent you give you some misery, with your 'word on 'em. But for now, I'm gonna give you some misery right now."

The gun body dart sprang within from Matt's feet. He stepped to hold on a rock.

Croyton's lips moved. "I am put 'em never done that, Dillon. Damn! Come on, let's see you dance!"

Three more shots hit the dirt even closer to Matt's feet. Still Matt didn't move. Two more shots, and the gun would be empty.

A grin split Croyton's face. "You think? I'm enjoying the gun, eh?" He reached behind him to an angle of the wooden building, and, still keeping his eyes on Matt, pulled a Winchester repeating rifle into view.

Matt remembered now—the Croyton boys. There was Phil Croyton, Sammy, Joe, Will, Lester and Phil. They had ranged around for a while, robbing small-town banks. They had held up stage-coaches, and even they had even robbing a train and robbed the passengers. But apart from chattering with their guns, they had never been known to use them. It was Phil Croyton that Matt remembered now. There, maybe four, years ago Phil Croyton had been in Dodge. There had been a brawl in the Lady Gay saloon, and Matt had put Phil in the cells to rest off. The following day word had come that a wagon-train was being heldbacked by a party of renegade Canadians.

For some reason that Matt couldn't recall right

then, Dodge had been short of men at the time. Phil Croyton had pleaded with Matt to let him ride out with him, and Matt had agreed. It had been due to much as Matt to suppose that the Canadians had been driven off with little damage done to the wagon train, and he had at last saved Matt from a dangerous wound, Matt thought the youngster had probably saved his life.

Because of what Phil had done, Matt decided to release him right away. Phil said he was moving



There were double the odds in that a gun



Matt caught the boy, as if owed more than a reply.

on the following day. He was working outdoors over at Forked Creek, he said, but he felt that if he spent the night free in Dodge, he might not meet much trouble, and so could be away in just time the following dawn? It was later that night that the stage came in with a "wanted" poster—with Phil's name on it below the Grayson name.

If Phil had suspected his capture when Matt offered it to him, he would have had a very heavy heart. Matt had shown him the poster. "Get going now, Grayson," he had told him. "I owe you a lot. I also have a duty to perform. Get going now, but be sure that at an hour's time I'll be on your trail."

Young Grayson had looked at Matt as if he couldn't believe his ears. Then he went out, mounted up, and rode off. That was the last Matt had seen of him, for he made good use of his six hours' rest, and Matt had grown caught up with him.

Now, here was Phil Grayson, guessing for Matt because he said Matt had saved his life and given him personal money. It was something Matt couldn't ignore.

Phil, or Phil-Grayson—as the "wanted" poster had called him—had been telling what Matt's mind carried him back over the years. He was saying, "... and as I put you and me will take a little with Dillon."

He looked the minute of the Winchester towards Ed Houston. "Yes?" he called. "Come over here and get in the barn with your family?"

Matt said, "Don't forget there's another member of the family, Grayson—the boy you made Houston mad in to me with the phony message to get me out here, away from Dodge. I left word for my Deputy to follow me out here. He's due any minute.

You won't get away with it." Matt wished he had left with a message.

The gun was back on Grayson's knee then. "When I'm gone do you'll take the state of a murderer out, horses?" He jerked his head at Houston, who was now standing by the barn door. "Get inside. I'll get the blasted horse to do it so's you won't get out for a while."

Houston turned his eyes to Matt, and then did as he was told. Under Grayson's direction, Matt walked slowly to a length of timber lying near the door of the barn, which Houston used to keep the doors shut by resting them in wooden sockets fixed to the doors themselves.

Matt knew deliberately to pick up the timber—deliberately, because any sudden movement might cause Grayson's finger to jerk on the trigger.

"And don't try any..." Grayson began.

What stopped him was the length of timber crashing against his chest. Matt had bent down slowly, and grasped the timber slowly, but his arm movements were as swift as lightning. He swept the length of wood round like a whip, and in the next moment flung himself full length on the ground.

Before Grayson could get forward, a shot boomed itself in the ground only inches from Matt's head. As the man's knee hit the dirt, Matt drove up his legs, flung himself, and flung himself forward. His hand showed him a vice over Grayson's gun wrist, and his left leg swept up under the arch of his own right arm and that of Grayson's to land under the man's arm.

The blow was Grayson falling backwards, leaving his wrist to Matt's hand. The gun fell from his grasp, but Grayson was so strong and wary as word said, for all his years, and he recovered with a

rain like that of a shower-bath, and drench himself in them.

Matt changed the falling, long fire, and returned his man. Then he brought his fist up to a short, powerful punch that caught Croyson on the point of the gun. The copper eyes glared, and the thin shape of Paw slid to the ground.

Matt released Ed and his family. Hevahan looked downcast. "Matt, he was mad enough to have killed them both if I hadn't played the game he suggested the second. I'm sorry."

Matt smiled. "You couldn't have used any other way, Ed. Forget it. Now I'll get me and my promise back to Dodge, and send young Jed home."

Two hours later Paw Croyson was sitting on the bench in the cell behind Matt's office, his head in his hands, weeping in frustrated rage. Matt brought him a meal.

Paw took time off to start, "You can take that away. Food from your hands would choke me."

"Tell me, Croyson—just why do you want to kill me? Only once I ever met any of your boys—that was Phil—I let him go when by rights I should have held him for the county judge."

Paw looked up, his eyes blazing. "That's just it!" he roared. "You let him go, and because of the way you treated, because of what you did for him Phil left the boys and me, and went straight. Our hearts were changed, changed his name, bought a farm and started down." Paw brought his head down on a punch on his heavy thigh. "Children all his' that weren't all? Dang me if the other boys didn't go visiting Phil on his farm just outside Knoxville City, Treacy, see how he'd married a pretty wife and got a nice farm, and dang me if they all didn't turn straight—left me on such a reel! Now they all go home and spend it and is wanted and married! They're all married now! Matt do you see why I had to kill ya?" Paw's head went down on his hands again. "They won't love neither' to do with me. I'm not only on my own—I'm an outcast. I refuse no family's ashamed of me!"

Matt left the food tray on the bed by the older man. Then he went to the telegraph office and sent off a message.

Five days later Phil Croyson rode into town. When he walked into his father's cell, Matt left down riding. When he went back on horse back, Phil said, then behind the bars where Matt had

looked him in with his father, "That's ready to come with me now, Matt!"

"So long as he keeps in Town, I can't send him", said Matt. "And I guess that if he doesn't go robbing any more steel-cars he can the law will let him out. It was a good number of years ago now since he held up the last one."

The old man stalked through Matt's office without looking at him. He recovered his horse in silence.

Phil said, smiling, "He'll be too busy helping my wife hang up his grandchildren to ride the backstreet trail again."

Paw stared in his saddle and glared at Matt. "Don't think I've talked with you, human," he said. "I were you a punch on the jaw." He turned to Phil. "Croyson, son," he said. "Let's ride home!"

Matt watched them ride the dirt as they trotted towards the northbound trail. His smile was a little wider. He figured he'd have to wait a maybe long time for Paw Croyson to pay him back that punch on the jaw.



"That's ready to come with me now, Matt!"

# IRON HORSE

## Medicine Men



Marked that Dillon rode the narrow trail through the forest valley. It was hidden land by the wooded borders of Comanche pasture. It was Comanche territory, the wide, red-poured valley, although five miles to the east over the rounded hump of the hill where it dipped gently to yet another valley, the Comanches had no claim to the land. Simply in times of war, they happily moved to the warmer lands of their territory.

Just now there was an uneasy trace between the people of Red Eagle and the westward-advancing pioneers, a trace balanced on a knife-edge, which Mark had been striving to maintain while some more permanent force for a lasting peace was needed yet. A thoughtless move—especially from the whites—could set the war drums hammering and the painted people galloping.

The peace had been held now for some two months, and Mark believed that if it could be held six months another month, the Department of Indian Affairs in Washington, whose agents were about, would have been able to impress on Red Eagle that this time there would be no more double-crossing. The scheme was easy to see, but the principle being worked at was that there was no reason why white men and red should not live side by side in peace.

There would always be menaces as enemies still, but if Red Eagle and the other leaders of the Comanches could be made to see that white men of the valley would be severely punished according to the white man's law, and that they must not be dealt with out of hand by the Comanche people, then a big step towards peace would have been taken.

Mark's thoughts were strongly broken and

broken to a halt by the sight of two men who were working with surveyor's poles and measuring instruments. There was only one reason why they were there—the railroad would open up the west much more quickly than the lumbermen feared, and—when not here, not across Comanche territory just at this time.

Mark rode over to where the two men were working. Near by was a two-horse wagon with their camping equipment and two riding horses were tethered with the wagon-horses in a circle at the edge of a clump of bushes.

The men looked up from their calculations as Mark rode up. They were both well-built, middle-aged men for the job, Mark thought, but their long faces, bespeaking a widespread frame, carried impressions of determination and responsibility. They looked tough.

They saw Mark's badge, and answered his questions readily enough. This was their first assignment for the Southern Cross Railroad Company, and they were surveying a branch track up into the wooded territory westwards.

The taller of the two smiled. "We guaranteed to have the route surveyed and planned a month earlier than the surveyor the Company usually employs. That's how we got the job, and we're right up to schedule."

"That's fine," said Mark, "and the railroad will be welcomed. But you can't cut this valley for your track."

The shorter and stouter of the two, who was obviously the senior, said, his eyes narrowing, "And who says we can't, sir? The Company has a franchise from the Government, and we've got full authorization to lay, claim or otherwise acquire land for the development of the railroad."

"Have you here," countered Mark. He smiled briefly. "Not even a license can stop you as the Supreme Institution of Law, and I don't want to stop you."

"Then what?"

Mark told them of the negotiations between the Government and Red Eagle's people. "Then he had said: 'A pay I didn't start up with you two before you'd get to the doing this valley with your work. You see, just over to the east there—no more than five miles—another valley runs parallel with the one. You could have built your railroad there!'"

The shaman came made no expedient protest with his hands. "We've seen this valley, man. It needs clearing and leveling in places, and a small bridge would have to be built. This valley is clean of all obstacles, no bridges are needed. It will be just a case of laying the track—cheaper and quicker. That's all there is to it. I'm sorry about your Indians. But they'll be recompensed—if they can show some legal rights to the land. If they can't, the strip we use becomes the property of the Company."

Man repeated the two men greedily for a few moments. Then he said: "There's another question—apart from the effect the right of your surveying equipment may have on the Comanches accepted in the peace treaty."

"And that is."

"How much longer the Comanches will let you stay alive."

The two men looked at each other for a moment, then burst into laughter. The taller of the two pointed to their traps, set up a few yards away from them. Laying aside a worn two-Winchesters "See those, man?" he said. "Well, we realize that we can deal with any pleased Indians who show up. The Indians have no answer to a fire repeating rifle. Don't you worry about us. We can take care of ourselves."

Man said, "It's not you I'm worried about. I've told you—peace in this territory is balanced on a knife edge. You go clearing land, the Comanches have held for hundreds of years—and in the name of the Government—and you'll start another Indian war. Now, why don't you think about it? All right, so the other valley is going to take longer to prepare, the track is going to cost more to lay. But by using that one, a deal of lives will be saved—maybe including yours."

The shorter of the two stopped across Man's horse. "You produce an order, Marshal, so that effect, and maybe we'll listen."

"You know I can't do that," said Man, "and even if I could it would be too late."

"Then why don't you ride back to your town and make sure you've got an order heading the law while you're away? We're short on time, Marshal. It all depends on this, for us, and we're short of men."

Man repeated them blankly. "Maybe you've chosen an area that you think," he said, with some sarcasm in his voice.



Rayburn

He rode back to Dodge, gruff-faced, his two messages to Major York at Fort Laramie to warn him that trouble might break out at any time, and then, with Quinn Asper, set out for the Dickinson Agency, where General Forsyth, from the Department of Indian Affairs, was conducting the delicate negotiations with the Comanches.

They found Forsyth glowering peering by his already saddled horse outside the agency big tent. He looked up with blank eyes at Man and Quinn and scowled him. He made a wary gesture with his hand.

"It's all over," he said. "Red Eagle has taken his medicine men from the conference. There'll be war now. Man—director of a railroad company sent you surveyors to make a branch line running north—over Comanche territory. It strikes me Washington doesn't know half of what goes on in its name. If only they had contacted me . . ."

"What's happened to the surveyors?"

Forsyth shrugged. "They were taken by some of Red Eagle's young men. From what I gather, they're holding them . . . something about taking their medicine from them."

"Haven't you told Red Eagle of the consequences of him capturing the surveyors?"

"Of course I told him. What's the use? There are too many young hotblood who won't be held in check. I believe Red Eagle wants peace for his people, and I think some of the younger braves





Red Eagle is brave

would have accepted it—if they had had proof that we meant to shake by our moral promises to them. But before we have time to show them our good will, this cultured company 'Masters in'."

"They'll kill those two youngsters."

Forsyth said, "They'll be the last of many when folk—and red. There's nothing I can do for them. I can't get a message through to Fort Larned at once. They are the cause of it, and you'll have to forget me if I feel better about them and say they must take their chance. They should have remained in at the first place, to find out what the position was. They must have known they were in Camanche land."

Matt added, "But we can't just leave it at that, Colonel. It's not just those two men. Think of all the soldiers—men, women and children—who are going to suffer!"

"Don't you think that's been my best thought? I've made my report. My role in pecking—in should be through by now—and then I'm going to do the only thing left open for me in the code to Fort Larned. I'll send a telegram to Washington, preparing them for war and asking for reinforcements. Black Cloud, Red Eagle's reddest man, gave us an hour to leave. He couldn't hold the young men back any longer than that, he said."

Matt turned to Quint. "You know Red Eagle better than I do, Quint," he said. "Would we have

any chance if we went to peckly with him, now that things have gone as far as they have?"

Quint Aspen shrugged. "Maybe with Red Eagle, but Black Cloud carries a lot of sentiment with the younger warriors. Black Cloud is no friend of ours. But any chance to stop the Camanches taking the war-road is worth trying. If we're going to take it, we'd better start riding now. My guess is that Red Eagle will have moved his people north-west into the hills. From there he has a good base for fighting a smoldering war."

Colonel Forsyth's sick came out of the big office. "All ready, now, sir," he said.

Forsyth turned to Matt. "Give up the idea, Matt. We can't afford to lose men like you and Aspen, not the two fools who wouldn't leave to reason."

"It's not the two fools I'm thinking of to reach, Colonel. Like I said, they'll only be the first of many if we can't stop this thing."

Colonel Forsyth remained in his room. "This isn't my day for pecking house arguments," he said. "All I can do is to wish you good luck—and then ride the nearest man the ground to Fort Larned so that propositions can be made." He turned his horse. "I can only hope that sometime you and Aspen come out of the show."

"If we don't, it won't be our fault, Colonel," Matt answered with a brief, grim smile.

Matt and Quint came upon Red Eagle's village just before sunset. As Quint pointed, the Chief had taken his people north-west into the hills some three miles from the Agency and about twenty miles from the valley where the two men had spotted off the automobile excursion.

Their approach, as they followed the slowly defined, white trail, had been observed some miles back, and as they came to the defile leading to the Sierron rise which Red Eagle had withdrawn his people they were met by a dozen or so horse, who surrounded them to silence or their passage and accompanied them to the entrance of the village.

There was no sign of the two men, but their carrying poles, painted red, white and black, were stuck into the ground near the Chief's lodge, together with the tripod.

Two of the young men held their horses as they dismounted, and then led the menets away.

Red Eagle came out of his lodge, followed by Black Cloud. The Chief, a man of about fifty but

looking much alike, regarded Matt and Quint with a stare on which no expression could be read, but the handsome man, tall, lean and some ten or twelve years younger, looked at them with obvious malice.

"If Black Cloud had his way, I wouldn't give a handful of dirt for our chances," said Quint sullenly.

Matt spread his hands in token that their visit was out of place.

Black Cloud's lips curled. "Peace!" he said. "The only peace you bring to the Comanche nation is the peace of death!"

Red Eagle said, "I will hear you talk." He turned his back on them, and extended his hands.

Matt made no follow, but was roughly stopped by two horses, who removed his gun-belt. Quint, in usual, was warned.

There was no courtesy of pipe or drink as the lodge for Matt and Quint. Red Eagle sat cross-legged, flanked on one side by Black Cloud and on the other by his son, Flying Hawk.

Matt started to speak, and his immediately that he was talking to dead men. Perhaps Red Eagle had already killed the two survivors and knew that, now, there was no returning from war. Matt explained that the two men, although authorized by the Government to carry out their work, did not have the Government authority to do the work on territory which the Comanches claimed and which was under Comanche with Colonel Fawcett. A misunderstanding had arisen, but it was no reason for the Comanche people to put on their war paint. The work the white men were doing was in connection with the Iron Horse, which would bring great advantages to red men and white alike.

Black Cloud stood up. "This is all the more reason why the two white men should die. The Iron Horse will bring nothing but sadness and wailing to the Comanche people. It will bring more white men to rob them of their land, to take their food. The medicine pipe and the tears of the white men, which we have captured, are wrong. These we must keep, and put on our war paint. Those that come to the Comanche land will never leave it, nor yet shall they ever possess it."

The Chief turned to his medicine man. "Black Cloud speaks the truth," he said. "We have had war for years before, and for a while there is peace between your people and mine. But all the time more white people come and try to drive us from our hunting lands. Are we to sit round our fire

and wait while our numbers are made so small?"

"Chief, you know that the horse-soldiers of the Great White Father are as bad as the chiefs of the great tribes. As surely as night follows day they will come if you follow the war trail, and there will be big war. You will kill many white-eyes but the white-eyes will kill many more Comanches. This you know. And in the end the Comanche will be no more."

Red Eagle drew himself up. "It is better to be so near with horse-archers as to be able with Lakota. As he finished speaking he stood up.

Black Cloud tilted the flap of the lodge and looked out on them.

Red Eagle spoke slowly. "What I lie with my feet spread, pointing towards the west, I see the Chief of the Comanche of Park River. Now you have I looked that war upon. Hear me, and sleep!"

Instantly Black Cloud covered a band of charcoal to the young horses who had run to the entrance of the lodge at his call. Then he, too, after throwing a look of hatred towards the two white men, left the lodge.

Red Eagle turned to Matt and Quint. "It is as you have said. If there is war, my people will fight bravely and will kill many white men, but in the end my people will be no more. This I know. But the smoking of my people's land, even while we are making peace, is wretched, and it is not the less wretched we have suffered. My young men believe the medicine pipe and the tears they have captured will be strong medicine against the white-eyes."

Matt shook his head. "They are not medicine pipes, nor is that cupped a man."

"Tell my young men that and they will not believe you."

"But if I can promise you that the Iron Horse will not pass through Comanche territory—and show you that it will not pass through—is not that a reason why there should be no war?"

The old chief suddenly looked wiser, braver. "I have fought the white-eyes all my life, and I have seen our people die in numbers. I know that there is no stopping the white men. Now I would save my people from being utterly destroyed. But I can do nothing. I am a chief, and I can do nothing. Our young men are full of strength now. I cannot stop them. They will use their strength until they are no more."

Suddenly Mart hammered the palm of his hand on to his knee. "What if I can give you a plan so that your young men can use their strength and win honor and yet live, a plan that will keep peace between our peoples? Will the Chief listen?"

Red Eagle regarded Mart in silence for some moments. Then slowly, and with great dignity, he sat down.

An hour later in the ropes in which they had been lodged, Mart and Quetz sat talking softly. Quetz said, "Without Black Cloud, I believe your plan would work, but that army outside will try and take the horses out of it, and in their presence would be might well succeed. They see Red Eagle as being too old to lead them in war. Flying Hawk is too young to have proved himself, and that means the war leader would be Black Cloud. He would then be only a step short step from the overall chieftainship. And if he ever became Chief..."

"The plan has got to work. They're holding the two European prisoners. So for all they've suffered are losses on the land. We've got to rely on Red Eagle being able to over-ride Black Cloud." Mart slid down into a lying position. "Sleep," he said, "is what we need right now."

"And," said Quetz, following him, "someone to watch us all the time there is no the world."

The moon hovered in the night folds, and covered in the overcast; talk hung in its silver light. A figure moved stealthily among the shadows of the cliffs toward the ledge where Mart and Quetz lay. It reached the top of the ropes, crouched a moment, and slid through the narrow opening like a prey-hunting snake through the grass.

Quetz, sleeping, sensed the opening, stirred. The hollow figure of Mart remained still. The figure copped, nearly over Quetz, its hand moving in the furtive change which suggested its intent close. There was a knife in the hand now, and the figure was crowded above the sleeping man, the arm spread to strike. The figure moved back, the arm made a small upward movement, gave to swooping down with fatal swiftness.

Suddenly the top of the ledge was flung back, and the light of a flaring torch was thrust into the darkness. The figure's fatal swing round towards it as it started back. Marshal Man Tahan stood in the opening, flanked by two of Red Eagle's young warriors. Black Cloud, crouched over the bundle beneath the blankets, his knife arm still



The light was raised where the sleeping men

upraised, looked disbelievingly first at Matt and then at the handful at his feet.

The bandits staggered, and from the mass of blankets, Red Eagle raised himself like a spring puma. There was groans of anger from the two young warriors who flanked Matt. His eyes were, and during those idle to idle like a cornered animal Black Cloud realized that he had been tricked. He had been caught in the act of killing his chief, the penalty for which was death.

With an animal cry of fear and hate, he flung himself at Matt, the knife clanking upwards as he came. Matt flung himself to one side, and at the same time brought his heavy foot up with clattering force against the Indian's wrist. The knife flew free from the nervous fingers, clattering into the clump of the sage. In the next second, the two young warriors had flung themselves in they on the madman's rear. He went down slowly under a blow to the head from the blunt side of a war hatchet.

Red Eagle went to his feet at the same time that Quirt sat up. The Chief nodded to the two warriors, who dragged the already condemned Black Cloud from the spot. Then, with immense dignity, the old man followed them.

Quirt stretched back and let his breath out in a deep sigh. "There was a manana," he said, "when I thought Black Cloud was going to attack me first. Which would have been a pretty thing."

Matt smiled. "That would have been a pity, else we had persuaded Red Eagle that Black Cloud would attempt something like this to get us out of the way and prevent any danger of an attack from out of the bushes the way we were."

The following day, after the warriors and young men had been dismissed or driven by Red Eagle, the Chief led his people back the way they had come, and beyond, to the valley east of the valley in which the two surveys had been captured. There, at a spot about equidistant from either end of the valley, the women set Red Eagle's ceremonial fire. There was, in front of him as he sat, the sun-quartz prism and the tripod were set up. From one end of the valley to the other on the westward hill were lined every warrior and young man of the Park River Comanches, in divisions of about twenty-five parts. One of the older men, evidently the Chief, addressing spoke at his bow. At a sign from Red Eagle, the bow was pointed skywards, and the flaming arrow began its descent.

At the same moment, walking in tall of smoke, the warriors on the hill began new action, each one of them taking the nearest knoll to him, and coming with it, down the left to the foot of the valley, across the valley floor, and up the hill on the other side. There he flung down the rock he had been carrying, and picked up another, carrying it to the opposite hill.

Slowly the piles of rocks on the summits of the hills grew, and the numbers of rocks across about the valley and impeding any sort of progress diminished. The older men of the tribe rode along the ridge, keeping a check on what was happening.

Matt and Quirt rode to a spot on the western hill where the two surveys sat, guarded by youths who had not yet been given their sacred names.

Matt smiled as they surveyed them as they were here, and thought that the next lines of smoke that came also showed would in time be come have a satisfying witness as then.

The shorter of the two sat in the dust by his side. "You named someone, then, Matt?" he said. "Your talk sounded like you were an Indian lover?"

Matt said, "Right now I'll let that pass. Maybe sometime I'll take time out to push those words back into your chest. You men are fond of life, I guess? Well, would you be willing to give those surveying poles and that tripod up to something as exciting as looking for your lives?"

"You mean . . . put them?"

Matt nodded. "That! They are the prizes to go to the braves who carry most rocks and clear most ground. The Comanches are having a contest of strength. Those are the prizes. Of course, by the time they have finished they'll have cleared more ground than you need clearing to lay your track."

The sides of the two men looked at Matt, he was laughing. "But we were surveying the other valley. Say? I'm beginning to see . . ."

"I wish I was," grinned his companion. "All I can see is more Indians than I can count running up and down the sides of the valley, carrying rocks."

"That's right," said Matt. "They're clearing the valley for you—the smoking, except for those poles and that tripod. By name, there won't be a rock bigger's a pebble in the valley."

The shorter man said, "It would have taken a gang



At a sign from Red Eagle, a bloody arrow waved for the men.

of Irish laborers there—four—maybe more—days to do this. We've got to done for nothing."

"Right again," said Matt. "You've made up the two days you've lost as prisoners, the railroad company's been saved money, and the line can be re-routed through this valley, leaving the valley to the west untouched. Because of this, an Indian war will have been prevented. And all because the Indian nation, those colored poles of yours and that tripod are strong medicine."

As the day went on, some horses started, spooked, calmed, to the ground. A sack was made where each fell, and men there who could was allowed to take over the rest of the work allotted to the exhausted man.

The sun was low in the west as five horses, running wild now, their heads bleeding and sore, their chests heaving, their muscles stiff, perished themselves in dragging lines, but with guide in their eyes, to their chief. To four of them Red Eagle solemnly handed out of the surveying poles, to the fifth, the man who those men as would be known as the mightiest man in the Comanche nation, he handed the tripod.

Over the lower of the hill to the west, the squares had pitched the tripod and lit the fire and cooked the food for a celebration. Most of the dinner that night was square dinner, there were few

meatmen who were not too exhausted to lift one foot as first of the other.

The taller of the two surveyors shook his head. "I don't get it," he said. "If those Indians had had any sense, they would have lined up to be taken on by the Company and get paid for doing that. Instead, they ran themselves over the ground and die for something that is nearly useless to them."

Matt smiled. "One day you'll hear about Comanches," he said. "The most degrading thing they can do is to have to work with their hands. That's left to the squares, squares and slaves. A warrior only hunts and fights."

"Or burn his heart in stones like the one," said Quinn, dryly.

"I hear no," said the shorter of the surveyors, "how the look they can see any medicine in those poles and that tripod."

Matt stood up and stretched. "Maybe they see more than we think," he said. "Something must have told us what lot of wrong medicine is it as food off the rest of war we were leading for." He turned to Quinn. "I guess we better start riding, Quinn. If we leave right now we'll be at Fort Laramie as dawn—as dawn is well. Colonel Fowler he won't be sending his soldiers, and to get up here and start talking again."

"Let's go," said Quinn.

# KANSAS KILLERS













# KANSAS KILLERS











# The TRAIL RAIDERS

**A**s Morson was the wildest stage-coach driver Marshal May-Dillon had known. Four times in the last six months his stage had been held up on the Cimarron Trail, each time in the area of Crooked Creek. On two occasions Art had been guaranteed about the herd because he had made a move to go to the aid of his passengers.

There had been two trail robbers, both of whom wore their handkerchiefs over their faces, leaving only the slit of their eyes between the tops of their handkerchiefs and the brims of their well-worn wide hats.

Chief Komerik, who had been riding gun for Art on the several occasions, had been shot dead by one of the robbers when he made a sudden movement with his Winchester.

For a while Matt had scoured the country around Crooked Creek to try and get a lead on the band-shooters. But all he found were old tracks that dated on him older so more than a mile, and the odd spot where there had been a fire when a camp had been pitched. Any travelling couple or party—medicine men could have been the organizers of these.

After the third hold-up, Matt had scoured the stage-coach, trying to be enough back not to be seen that he was travelling with it, but close enough

to be on hand when the need arose. But the third stop he had made with the coach had passed without incident. Other drivers called him, so he passed on the job to Quetz Apat and then to Porco Higgins. These shared eight days between them, and nothing happened. Matt reasoned, with some reservations, that the hold-ups had been the work of two men—middle-weight—who were making their way across the country. Maybe the heavy-weight mouth of trail between Dodge and Winslow—well, Crooked Creek about half-way between the two towns—had occurred all the attention from the robbers it would get.

Matt had to let it ride. Other things claimed his attention. It nagged him all the same that two-billions still rode free.

Then Art's coach was held up for the fifth time, and his passengers robbed. Again, two masked men had carried out the raid only two miles from where Crooked Creek cut the trail.

Morson, a rooster used at the best of times but a good man with an horse, had shown a great deal of anger when he escaped into Matt's office to report the robbery.

"I been driving this trap for nearly a year now,





Marshall," he stressed, "and five times my mouth has been backwashed. It's getting so's regular passenger won't ride with us. They say I'm a fast driver. And another thing—my pay don't cover the one more horse I already got from being gun-bushed, and it don't cover my more gun-busting. I'm a'ble to get 'You told, Marshal, and you can't laugh up coffin', but it's time some action was taken to bring these devils in."

"Would you say it was because two men were the previous ones, Art?"

"Could be. But who has told? They got their feet covered."

"What about their clothes? And their horses?"  
Mar's voice was edgy. "You've got eyes in your head. Didn't you take my notice of those things?"

For a second Morton's eyes glinted with more anger. Then he sighed, and nodded. "Don't laugh, Marshal, that's what eyes is for. Then I said 'You I guess it's a fair thing to say they're the same two, though, if it is, they got new horses. A couple heavy ones and a mule they're riding now, an' the worst got a white fork running from between the ears down to his nose.'"

"Thank you, Art. We'll see if we can't get some

more. I'm just as keen to get them run as you are. If they're the same two, they are killers. I don't like having killers riding free around the territory. Whistangoon's made me responsible for."

Instead of making up with food and water and a bedroll, as he had done before, he sat out here on the trail, Mar sat and thought. The immediate action routine had been followed on the previous occasions, without any success. Now it called for something else.

He sat deep in thought for nearly an hour, letting the paperwork he had slide into the background. When he had finished thinking, he smiled. If Art could have seen him for the past fifty-five minutes or so, noting like his seat was glued to his wooden chair, instead of high-taking a towards Crooked Creek, he would have wondered.

Mar pushed himself out of his chair, snugged on his gun-belt, slipped his hat on his head, and walked over to the barn, where he talked to the manager, Mr. Rutlin, for another half an hour. He rapped in the back passenger's back room until dark, and during that time he went for Frank Haggen and had him take his horse and pony to Don Adams' stable. When Frank had done this he sent him and Quail

riding out towards Crooked Creek, dropping plenty of words around town before they left that they were going out there to keep a rendezvous with the Marshal.

When it was dark Matt slipped into Doc's surgery. Doc, who had been up for the previous two nights, was sitting at his barometer reading when Matt slid through the door. Matt didn't wake him, but he had him bare his rag. When he woke, Doc looked at him with no surprise and said, "What's the matter with you? Can you sleep?"

"I want to look up with you for a couple of days, Doc."

Doc Adams grinned. "The law's caught up with you at last. What are they sending to take you?"

Matt smiled and then told Doc about the latest hold-up of the stage, and what he planned to do. When he had finished, Doc said, "It sounds an awfully easy way of making two hundred dollars, or any way of thinking, but, then, I'm a simple man. How are you going to do it?"

"I thought maybe you could arrange some food for me from Miss Kirby's," said Matt.

Doc Adams shook his head and smiled, "I have some things in my store, but I never played dumb when yet, and I don't aim to start now."

An hour later he slipped into his surgery from the doorway of the Liverystable, loaded with food from Miss Kirby's store. He dumped it on the surgery-table and said, "There's beans and apples, and you can do your own cooking."

Matt looked at the pile of provisions Doc had dumped in. "Doc," he said, "I'm only going to take up for two days—that is, if no emergency breaks out on the mountains. There's enough here for me now for a week!"

"That's what I told Miss Kirby," grinned Doc, "but she said a big man like you needed plenty." Although Matt was "loaded up" he wasn't safe. He had a long talk with Mr. Bodan, the bank manager, in order to sleep.

The following day Quiet rode back to Dodge and opened up the Marshal's office. The day after that, about the middle of the morning, Matt rode into Dodge at the water of the stage-downed by Art Morrow, and Matt was accompanied by Fenton Higgins.

Soon it was all over town that news about the stage robbers had got down easy. Art Morrow, riding his mare in the Lady Gay saloon, grinned that "Washington ought to send out a new lawman."

Somewhere, later that day, there was a quarrel about in Dodge that Mr. Bodan's bank was shipping out a consignment of gold. Two men were employed to ride gun with Art, and the next morning Matt was on hand at the stage office as two small but extremely heavy wooden boxes were brought from the bank under the guard of Quiet and Fenton Higgins.

The gold was loaded on to the stage, with Art grumbling that this was just the thing for sure to bring a swarm of lawmen about his ears.

Matt said, "We've had orders to ride to Abilene as a special assignment, Art, so nothing would stop me and Quiet and Fenton riding secret with you. You've got an extra gun, so you should get through all right."

"I ain't sure I'm backer' no about, Marshal," said Art. "Doc, suppose it, the talk was all over town yesterday that there was to be a gold shipment going and there was so much talk I took it as something worth going. And what do I feel? Suppose it, I feel sure enough there is a gold shipment. So many people start off their remarks about it, most every horse between here and south, right to the Rio Grande, start know about it. Ain't two guns I want—it's a dollar from the Seventh Cavalry."

Still grumbling, he whipped up the horses, and as a cloud of dust the stage rolled out of town as to the Cimarron Trail. On the rim of the trail just outside Dodge, Art brought the horses to a halt, and looked southwards. Three trails then followed by dust clouds showed how when Matt, Quiet and Fenton were headed towards Abilene.

Art slackened his reins as he slipped, jerked the reins, and saw the stage rocking down the slope as he lay in shade via Crooked Creek.

At Farrow Creek, a few miles north of Dodge, Matt and his two deputies appeared, Matt moving right along and heading back almost due north, Quiet and Fenton turning back in a north-westerly direction.

It was then Springer, riding second gun on the stage, who first noticed the rider on the skyline, and at the moment Matt pointed him out to Art the rider turned towards the direction of the trail, coming for them. As he disappeared into a gulch on the way, Art whipped up the horses. "The riding team for Gals," he said.

Meanwhile Fenton and Quiet, who had made a sweep that would take them around Dodge and on to the Cimarron Trail in the west, saw the rider on the

display, too, he was on the edge over which they were able to hit the Cimarron Trail. They had been pushing their horses fast, but now they rode even faster. . . .

On the corners of buildings, which he approached some caution, hoping clear of the trails, Matt lashed his horse at the back of the building's bulging house, out of sight among the cluster of one-building there. Then he made his way in back of the corner and house to the back. He approached carefully—was the first place, because he did not want to be seen by anybody, and in the second because he hoped he had not ridden too far out before sweeping back. The corners of what he planned was based mainly on games, and if one of his games was the slightest bit out, Washington would have let in any other marks who played hangers.

It was Mr. Boston himself who opened the door at the back of the back building, in answer to his knock. The manager was serious. "I've been in a lather in case you didn't get back in time, Marshall," he said. "And right now I don't know that I like the idea of you making use of the back for this. I've played along so far, but there is only me and my two kids. If something went wrong..."

"Something's gone wrong so far," said Matt. "Now, have you lived somewhere for me?"

"There's only the front office, and my room here, as you well know. But I've had those cabinets moved. Big as you are, it should serve."

"Plant" said Matt, looking at the rooms formed by the cabinets and cupboards. It was big enough for him to stand in, taking him from the front office, but allowing him to see through the open door. On the other side of the room was the back table.

"You're working with a minimum of cash on credit?" Matt asked her head in the direction of where the clerk was working.

"Of course!" Boston's nervousness reflected itself in the corners of her eyes.

Matt walked over to the table, and asked the clerk:

"Of course it's locked," snapped Boston heavily. "You said for everything to go on as usual."

"And so it shall, except that from now on for the next five minutes you're both going stand with your hands on the air."

Both men swung round to the open doorway, from which the sound of the room had come. A tall, angry figure stood there, a Colt in each hand and a black bandana over the lower part of his face. The man spoke over his shoulder, into the front office.



The man had a Colt in each hand and a black bandana over his face.

"Keep them pre-parkers happy. Cy—and anyone else who just might come in."

Bobus's arms were stretched high above his head. Max held his on a level with his shoulders, and moved himself for independence the quickest with which the bodies would work. He had been out-manned by a matter of less than a minute. Play or stay another hour and he would have been in position in his killing-place, with his gun ready.

The wall, except that behind one of the posts at Bobus' "You," he said, got out your legs and open up the safe. Move quickly now, and don't try anything."

Bobus looked at Max, already blaming him for everything that was happening to him. "You've ruined me, Dillon," he said.

"Get the money out and get the keys." The rest of the men in the doorway was level and unharmed.

The bank manager brought one of his hands down slowly towards his vest pocket. The gunman's hand moved the Colt in his left hand round. "Easy now," he said.

"The . . . the key is in my vest pocket," said Bobus, brads of sweat standing out on his brow.

"If they ain't all that's in your vest pocket you'll have lead in your chest, bank-man. Now, come we go going?"

Bobus produced the key, and moved his a broken man towards the safe. His hand was trembling as he used it to take the lock. Finally the door swung open.

"Take all your men and spread 'em on the floor," said the man in the doorway. "Then put your everything in the safe or in the coat."

Mr. Bobus made a sound that was a cross between a sob and a groan, and started on his heart-breaking task.

"Now say, Harshel, we didn't quite expect you to be so smart—rolling up that side of the gold shipment. We ran through that easy enough. Guess the bullion house are full of men just to get us on the trail for you to side into, eh? When we got the signal to go ahead, we figured you was taking that the stage—out out of sight. Hey, you?—she was deceived at Bobus—"Harshel a yep?"

The man turned his eyes to Max again. "We figured you and your deputies would be right out of town—didn't figure one of you would side back. It don't signify, though. We was just that sure you

quick for you, I mean." He spoke over his shoulder again. "Roll all clear out there, Cy?"

"All clear is crap. But hurry it up, will you, Harshel? This place been empty of customers long enough. Someone's sure to come in."

"Well, you know what to do."

Bobus was now standing over the pile of gold coins, notes, securities and valuable bills that were piled in a heap on his coat.

"Roll up the money—up it with the arms. Make a nice parcel of it, bank-man." The gunman unhooked a length of rope from his belt, and wound it on the floor at Bobus's feet. "Then when you done that you can tie-up the horses."

The gunman shook his weight. "And don't bother of you make a move that looks funny. When I shoot I shoot to kill."

Max was busy examining documents, and none of them were to his liking.

Bobus was having difficulty getting the contents of the coat together. From the front office, Cy



called, "C'mon, Sam, waddy! We're a couple minutes behind schedule already."

"Here, you, le man, give this pack some help—put them extra in the middle 'n's they won't be able to fall out." The man in the doorway jerked his gun casually towards Matt. "Better you do this, put down your gun first."

Matt did as he was told, then started to where the two men half-crouched over the pile of packs, his hands almost under them watching.

"Two more mules, Mr. Bodin," Matt said. "How easy is to take these two out back, and—"

With the two out side of Mr. Bodin's broad-chest coat as either hand, Matt suddenly heaved the whole contents and the coat at the gunman, who was thrown in water and vines and will, and out off from the sight of Matt and the bank manager momentarily as the coat sailed towards him.

Both guns fired a rapid succession of shots, hitting through paper and breadbush and ricocheting from the soft mud of some of the corners of room.

As Matt flung the coat and its contents at the robber, his left elbow had jerked back, catching Mr. Bodin in the stomach. The bank manager fell backward to the ground, at the same time that Matt drove his forearm into the gunman's legs. The robber's body crashed into them while the gun went sailing long.

Sam fell backward with a crash into the front office through the open doorway. Matt followed, carried there by the force of his momentum. One gun had fallen from Sam's hand as it was jerked against the edge of one of the clerk's desks. Matt gathered it from the floor as he dashed past.

Oh, his trigger finger worked long before this, fired towards the open doorway. Matt flung up his gun and fired, and the head slammed against the head of Cy's gun, hammering it out of his hand. With almost the same movement, Matt continued the carry of the gun upwards to Sam's gun-wound.

Sam lay out a level of pain as the force of the blow caught him, plants on the jutting back of the outside wall-bone, and the gun sailed upwards as a small parabola before landing in the line of one of the desks.

By the time Frazer and Quinn arrived back in Dodge, accompanied more noticeably by a third man, an unshaven, shifty-eyed stranger whose pocket hands they had tied to the postman, Matt



After suddenly losing his gun at the postman.

had the two bank hold-up men safely in the cells, with two statements indisputably signed by them.

As the third man was thrust into the cell with the man called Cy, he took, a look of surprise showing his sudden flash, "Now, too, eh? What's connected with the case?"

"We've talked, Flint," said Cy Wilson. "We've told how Kamsack was shot. We don't want to be in at no rope party. The lawmen says what we told him will help keep us away from it."

"It's just like he says, Flint," said Ben. "We've talked."

Flint looked at Cy, and then at Sam Mitten, sitting on the bench in the next cell. Then he spat at Cy's feet. "Why, you low-down whining cypriots!" he said.

"We couldn't take the rap for you, Flint, not for the Kamsack killing. We ain't no killers," Cy spoke calmly, but firmly.

The next afternoon, in the stage from Fresno called slowly to a standstill outside the stage office, Mort was there to meet it.

As Mort climbed down from the seat and stretched himself, "Hi, Marshall!" he said. "Guess I didn't expect to see you back in Dodge so soon. Figured your trip to Adobe would keep you away a nice longer."

"So did a couple of other trail riders, Art."

"Other trail riders, Marshall?"

"The game's up, Morton." Mort's eyes were black. "Your partners don't take kindly to taking the rap for Kamsack's killing. They've talked. They've told him you're here waiting the game for the past three years—first from Delabole City, then from Fresno; then from Wichita, and now Dodge. A man set-up—on stage driver you'd know when trouble's with words was riding, and a rugged white guy's mail on the trail would tell your stage partners it was worth a hold-up. I don't know what the appeal was at Delabole or Wichita, but here, when a hold-up was worthwhile, you stopped on the rim out of town. If you didn't stop, your partners didn't bother. A guy you didn't move on to you had done before, Morton. You played this hand over too often, especially when you shot Chad Kamsack in the back when he looked like he was the other guy who was to share that day in a couple of shots."

Morton said Mort seriously: "I guess there had to be lawmen, somehow, with a brain as well as a quick gun-hand," he said. "I figured the hold-up-

game was a trap. I figured you going to Adobe was a blind, and that you'd double back on to the Cameron Trail, you and three or four dozens of years. That left Dodge and its bank wide open. We'd be moved on if we'd cleared the bank, but you did some thinking, eh, Marshall? Hey! We had it all out for Flint to lead you off on a chase—keep you outa Dodge long enough to clear the bank." He shrugged. "I guess that you had to be as lawless with brains."

Mort jerked his head in the direction of his office. "Get going, Morton. You won't have long to wait for your trial, the Circuit Judge arrives next week."

Morton stopped half-way across the street, and turned slowly to face Mort. "You know, Marshall, there ought to be a law against men like you. Why? You done so much double thinking on this one, I figure you got a crooked mind!"



"Get going, Morton," said Mort.



# LIQUID GOLD

**E**ven in the longest drought, the spring on Walter Lampson's small spread never dried. It's there any time have leached from the rock, steady flow of mineral water, but it never failed. Walt called it Heart Spring, because it pumped the water across his land in a life-giving stream.

Walt was an unambitious man, young though he was. In another place and at another time he might well have been a poet. He farmed his acres well, but the fate of his spread left him ample time for just wandering over it, looking at the earth, at the growth, at his fatening hares, enjoying the wild beauty of the land around him. He made enough to live comfortably.

Bordering Walt's land on three sides was that of Franklin Gotha's ranch. Gotha was the opposite of Walt Lampson in every way. He was short, stocky and mean, where Walt was tall, lean and satisfied with what he had. Gotha had no patience to even the largest spread in the country, and the more land and the more dollars he earned and worked for the more he wanted.

It was typical that Gotha should refer to Walt's spring as liquid gold. It was also typical of Gotha that he badly wanted to join Walt's land to his own, for the stream from the spring, flowing across the Lampson spread, flowed into Gotha's land. Gotha had a spring near the ranch-house, but in times of drought this had failed. True, there is fine water only there was Roman's Creek, which provided ample watering for Gotha's cattle, but that too in

times of drought dried. Always, however, there was Walt's stream flowing into Gotha's land from the spring. This was not enough for Gotha. The source of the water was not on his land, and there might come a time when for some reason or another the stream would be diverted.

Hardly Matt Dallas, in whose territory both men held their land, liked each of them, though primarily he would have wished for Gotha to be a little less grasping and for Walt to push himself a little harder.

Gotha despised Walt for being what he called a laid-about, a poor white Yankee, and Walt in his turn despised Gotha for being what he called a money-grubber and a land-grubber.

Two years earlier Gotha had made an offer for Walt's place. When Walt refused it Gotha tried to buy a share of the spring. Walt had wanted his creeked, lay smile.

"What's using you, Gotha? The water runs through your land, doesn't it? Should I be pleasing to turn the stream out and let it off from you?"

From that time the dislike between the two men had grown, each of them irritated more and more by the other's attitude and disposition. They edged at each other when they met in Dodge, once they had spread up to each other, and then had begun to fly. This had been outside Delmonico's, and Matt, who claimed to be passing, had reported them. So the number of them had grown for his gain, but it was a situation that was boiling and might sooner or later explode. Matt sighed when he thought of it, for



What did the work do for you?

did not like the idea of either of them getting hurt, especially where it might mean that one of them would put himself on the wrong side of the law.

But they were grown men, Men told himself, he could not face around them like a schoolmarum round a couple of rowdy kids. He just hoped that when the unpleasant came he would be around.

Foras Blaggen, to whom Walt bore a deeper resentment as dissembler, frowned. Walt. Quaid Jager, frowled himself, sympathized with Gotha.

The explosion came when Walt decided to enlarge and deepen a hollow about thirty yards to one side of the stream, direct the spring water into it to form a lake, and then channel the stream back to its original bed once the lake was filled. The lake would provide his water with any droughting, it would be a double insurance under way of a reserve during dry seasons, and it would provide him with the opportunity of sitting on the bank and fishing.

It took Walt a long time to complete the work, digging and back-building on his own, but finally it was completed. The small stream took a day or half all the lake. It took Gotha half a day to discover that the water of the stream had suddenly dried up. It took him half a moment to decide that Walt had finally done the thing he dreaded—cut off his only water supply, and out of spite.

He spun the chamber of his Colt, aimed it loosely at his partner, mounted up, and followed the dry stream bed over the boundary line onto Walt's land.

As the same time two other things were happening. Walt was laying dynamite under a large boulder that stood directly in the path of the channel he needed to cut to return the stream to its original bed, and Marshal Matt Dillon with Foras Blaggen and Quaid Jager were riding toward the dinner drinking on horse, following a large-scale outbreak of raiding.

Gotha had a certain amount of resourcefulness. It had been an exceptionally dry season, and his spring was reduced to a trickle that was swallowed into the earth after the thin stream had travelled no more than sixty or hundred yards. Matt Dillon had a certain amount of reason to feel that had things come even singly. Here he was, faced with an epidemic of raiding, and added to that it was the quarrelsome season the Walt Langsons and Ford Gotha. Things were always apt to break out between them in a dry spell.

As they rode on to Walt's land, Quaid said, "Probably find that the whole of Walt Langson's herd has been rustled from under his very nose. For sure, he wouldn't know if he'd lost six or seven horses. He's too gutbusted busy to come in out of the cold."

"Don't have to be rushing around all day long to be a good widower," said Foras. "First morning, quick selling guth-men like Gotha don't behave more in the long run. Most likely, we'll find Gotha got one or two strange brands among his herd. Not that he'd make 'em, only he wouldn't be quick to let anybody know he'd got a few strays among his breed."

Men looked up at the cloudless sky. "Could be with some rain," he said. "We'll stop when we come to Comanche Park. Quaid, why don't you ride on to Gotha's place—check up there? And Foras run down check with Walt. I'll ride on to the as Harper's Barn—there may be a trail to follow. Beyond the Barn there's good country to hold a lot of cattle on."

Some fifteen minutes later Matt heard the sound of a shot coming from the west, over his shoulder. Almost immediately it was followed by another. Matt paused, then after a moment or two he shrugged and rode slowly on. Could be Walt hunting.

Then there came a short ragged line of shot.

Matt didn't even pause this time. He turned his horse and began cantering back the way he had come. There weren't heading shots. They suggested a gun fight, maybe between three or four men.

Now the shots came singly, after short intervals,





like the gas-flights were faded up and taking breath on each other from behind cover.

Matt followed the sound. As he rode out from the edge of some scrub and boulder land on a rise, he looked down into the valley, where Walt had constructed his lake. He saw the stream running into it, and he saw the dry meandered beyond it. Then from some cover not far from a big boulder that stood between the lake and the flood-upland, he saw the puff of smoke and flame from a gun, and then heard the shot.

An answering shot came almost immediately from the other side of the small reservoir.

Matt decided to make sound and take the gun against the rock from behind. The picture was clear in his mind. Gopher had seen his stream dry up, and had come gunning for Walt. He had brought with him maybe one or two hands, that would account for the number of shots heard at first.

Matt felt irritation against both men rising. Walt had no right to cut off Gopher's water, but equally Gopher had no right to go gunning for Walt. All Gopher had to do was to take us to Dodge, and the law would force Walt to restore the stream to its course. It would take time, but it could be done.

Matt wheeled back to in the scrub, and then worked his way on foot until he was right behind some scrub faded up in a dip covered with scrub. His eyebrows were in surprise. One of the men was Quiet Apoor and the other was Fred Gopher. Gopher lay propped against a boulder, and there was a dirt-mat under his chair, right on his shoulder. His gun-hand lay across at his side.

Matt crawled to them. "What is all-fired sensation do you think you're playing at, Quiet?"



*What was a gas-flight*

Both men turned their heads in surprise. Quiet said, "That fool Walt Lampson has really gone off his head. He's dammed the stream and shot Gopher on the shoulder."

"I came on him working at diverting the stream," said Gopher, his lips twisting at pain from his wound. "I believed what he looked, and fired a warning shot, and Lampson showed his ear in the shoulder. Then Quiet came along, so, sure as anything, Lampson would have come and finished me off."

"Now make him, Quiet, you keep drawing his fire," said Matt. "I'll work my way round behind him as I worked round behind you. When I've got him, we'll take both these jokers back to Dodge. Then Apoor can punch up Gopher, and then Gopher can join Walt in the cells for a while to cool off."

"The back I want" started Gopher. "I'm water my rights to defend my water supply."

"Maybe," answered Matt slowly, "but you're also disturbing the peace."

Matt worked his way round to the other side of the small lake in a wide camp. The firing, well, in his left, continued sporadically. He moved a little faster and was curious. A back moved as he finished

put it, and a second later a bullet whined and whanged itself against the rock above his head. His back hairs rose after that. Walt might be blind, but he was no slugged with his eyes or with his gun.

After moving in on one for another five minutes, Matt judged he ought to be right behind Walt now, and he began to move towards the lake again.

As on the other side of the lake, he came suddenly on two men. One was Pecos Haggen and the other was Walt Longman. Pecos was crouched behind a low bush, his gun taking a bead on the other side of the lake. Walt was huddled forward, holding his head to his right shoulder, which was oriented east. His gun lay in the dirt near his useless right hand.

Matt, full of suspicion, lurched towards them. "Drop that gun, Pecos," he growled when he was only a yard behind them.

Pecos jumped, and his head swung round. "Goddie Pitt, Mattie Dillard! You sure come up on us like an arson. We got never grab-oll Godie over there. He's phunk gone off his head."

"I was just about to blow that big head over there," Walt said, grilling his teeth against the pain of the wound in his shoulder, "when up rode Godie, bring like a sentence. Couple me to the shoulder . . . I managed to get back here, and if Pecos hadn't arrived just then he'd 'a finished me off for sure. I'd only managed to get one shot at him—phunk at the same time as he did 'em into my shoulder."

"Pecos," said Matt, "you know who you're firing at over there?"

"Yore I do," answered Pecos. "That grab-oll, Godie."

"Wrong," said Matt. "You're sleeping dead for all you're worth at Quant Junction. Seems like Walt's one bullet hit Godie right in the same place as Godie's bullet hit him. Looks like I might have hit two targets. Not that I couldn't have afforded to hit two fly-bitches, but Doc Adams has hands got word to making both of you around the corner—guess he'll miss you both." Matt sighed. "Hey, Quant?" he shouted.



"Drop that gun, Pecos!" Matt growled when he was only a yard behind them.

"Hold your fire, I've got Wink Lampson here. He's wounded too. Get Gabe to his knees. We've ridden down Dodge. Like I said, Doc can patch Gabe up—a 4 Wink, too. They stay out tomorrow in the hills."

From the other side of the lake Quint roared up clearly. Fumes surrounded himself sharply, too. They stood staring in each other for a few moments across the fifty-yard wide lake, then both burst into laughter. Near Matt's feet, Wink wriggled into a shaky standing position, his gun in his left hand. Over on the other side of the reservoir, Gabe's head and then the rest of his trunk came suddenly into view.

Wink said, "The rotten stuff!" Then he raised his wringing left hand, and fired.

From the big boulder there came a blinding flash and an ear-splitting explosion. In a cloud of dust, smoke, steam and shattered fragments of rock, the big boulder disappeared as a big of black smoke. When new Quint and Gabe blew such a cloud of dust had been hit by a shell-fragment.

He and Farris, once they were able to get their breath back, reared round the edge of the lake towards them. They found them lying in a heap, gasping for air, their ears ringing, but otherwise silent. Now that the reverberations of the explosion had died away, they could hear the sound of rushing water. Where the boulder had been was now a gaping hole, and into the gaping hole, at a far faster rate than it was entering the lake, the waters of the reservoir were pouring—and disappearing into the bowels of the earth.

By the time Matt and Farris had helped Quint and Gabe to their feet, Wink had managed to stagger round the lake to join them. He and Gabe stood leaning weakly against a rock and watched the water emptying from the lake as if a giant hand had raised the basin.

Wink said, finally, "The dynamite! My bullet hit the dynamite!"

Matt eyed the fast-disappearing water grimly. "Looks like you've both lost out now," he said. "And, off the record, I'd say it damned well serves you right. Wink's going to have a lot more work delivering the water back again—and if he wants to regain his water supply Gabe is going to have to help him. Come on, you two, we're taking you into Dodge."

The eyes of Wink Lampson and Fred Gabe were



(The two men were almost killed)



The door of the office door open, and one of Gordo's men, one in

In the cells behind Matt's office, Walt and Gordo sat on their hard beds, their arms in slings, their shoulders bandaged. They faced each other through the iron bars separating the cells.

Matt sat behind his desk, wondering how long he could hold them, when the door of the office burst open, and Lee Forrest, one of Gordo's men, almost ran in.

"Looking for Master Gordo, Marshall," he panted. "Boss told you holding him here. I've got news for him. That spring of his—well, dried up this morning. Now it's bubbling out all over with water. There been no rain, but suddenly it's come in his spite. It's a miracle, or I just don't get it."

Later that day Gordo and Walt sat in Doc Adams' buggy, looking down at Gordo's gushing stream where it welled out of the ground.

Matt sat his horse and looked down at it too, his face wearing a small smile.

Gordo shook his head. "I don't get it."

"His water," said Walt. He sighed. "Looks like now you're freed from all that hard work of putting the stream back in its proper bed, I guess. So it on my mind."

Doc chuckled. "Well, I don't reckon that's rightly so," he said. "Knew what I think? I think that when Walt's folks saw that rock slip-high and opened up that hole, he set off Gordo's spring a-gushing again. Reckon it's the water from Walt's stream goes underground and come up at the

nearest, weakest spot of the ground. Gordo's spring's lower level than Walt's. I'll lay you took ten dollars that's what happened. And if Gordo wants to keep his spring going he'll have to do some work with Walt."

Matt said, "He sure will. For if Walt puts the stream back, Gordo's spring will dry up again. Now, he'll have the old stream, but that spring is still the lowest. Now, if you two think-heads could get together, you could both have what you want. Walt could have his hole, Gordo could have his spring, and by feeding part of the water into the lake, controlling the outflow into the hole in the ground, and keeping some water flowing through the stream bed."

Walt skipped his thigh. "God-damn if you ain't right, Marshall!"

Gordo said no more. "I'd suit be as his accomp. He'd suit be able to cut me off any time he wanted."

Doc said, casually, "Now, why don't you two get together over this? Say Gordo pays Walt some dollars and becomes a partner in the spring in Walt's land. Everybody'd be happy."

Matt rode back to Dodge with Doc sitting in the buggy, leaving Walt and Gordo hammering out their agreement.

Matt replied. "It's a relief to know I haven't got to worry about those two killing each other. Now I can make right down after those vandals."

Doc chuckled. "I reckon that water could be called a boiling spring."

# The Horse Thief



A voice holed at the moon, and was answered by another over on the far hill. The moon was clear between a gap in the clouds, and the figure creeping towards the house reflected over the blundered sleeper looked at it and smiled. The embrace of the dying fire gave an end-of-life glow to the forest beyond it, and the sleeper stirred. The creeping figure froze into a statue until the breathing became regular again, and then went more moved stealthily forward.

The house was big, well-wooded and heavily-shielded—a fine specimen. A muscular, weather-worn hand reached out for the robe, which reflected the moon in a reply. The sleeping man's head was on his neck. Now the robe was loose from the young man. The animal, in two back and the wheel of its eyes showing usually, lifted its head and moved.

The man moved the figure was on its back, and turned it away from the rock and north and small trees towards the open place which began some two hundred yards away at the bottom of the sloping hillside ground.

In his blanket, Marshal Max Dillon stirred into wakefulness, the moon of his horse pulling through his sleeping vision. Vague memories in front of him brought him fully awake. He saw the rider on his

horse's body, in the moonlight he saw the muscles on the animal's rump gather themselves together. At the same time, he shot out of his blanket. In the next split second he leaped himself forward and upwards from the crouching position he had leaped himself into as he came up from the ground and out of the blanket.

He went reached toward the body of the horse-drawn just as the animal took the first movement of an animal leap forward. By the time the horse completed its leap it was some yards distant. Feeling the bulk of weight on its back, it delivered a kick, pointing in the direction in which it had been turned. At the same time it turned its head accurately to where Max was in the process of delivering a short punch to the thief's jaw.

The head snapped back, the back arched, the body lifted maybe a foot and then fell heavily to the ground.

Max moved over to his horse without looking to see if the figure was liable to snap where he had put him. When he looked a few minutes later, he found that the culprit usually lost all interest in things, and stayed that way for some minutes.

He re-entered the house, and then stood over the thief. Horse-riding, as a country where a man's life might depend upon his horse, was a hanging

success. If the thief had got away with the horse, it would have left Matt vulnerable in a dry tract of country, with miles to go before he could find water and with many more miles to go before he reached any habitation. It would have left him in a dangerous position. The jumping man had been brought in to discourage this sort of thing. Home-making on the trail was about the loneliest crime in the book.

Matt took by the man, about to slap his face to quieten the coming-oned process, and it was then that he saw blood on the small rock on which the man's head rested. Instead of stopping the fist, Matt lifted the head; there was a gash on the back of his where it had hit the rock.

Matt bowed the wound, brought around life to the man's head, and looked up from coffee. Down began lifting itself slowly out of the man. With a streaming ring of coffee in his hand, Matt washed the horse's breech in the dose that had replaced the coffee on the fire.

As he started to rise, the man stirred, the eyes opened. He face opened in pain. He pushed himself slowly up into a sitting position, lifting his head to his head as he looked on. He looked at Matt steadily, wearily, at the same time his whole hand making a slow, tentative movement towards his holster.

Matt made no move. He had seen rather that the holster was empty, because was empty. That was strange, for no man touched the country without some of some sort. Now it was strange to Matt that the man was used to carrying a gun, and expected to find it there by his thigh.

He put his hand down. "You took a easy crack on the head, which ain't going to help me get you back to Dodge City," he said.

The expression was still blank. "Dodge City? That would you be taking me to Dodge City too?"

"There's coffee. Free yourself some, and don't try any funny business!" Matt poked his hand towards a mug lying on its side near the man. "There's some bread, too. Then we'll break camp. I'm taking you out Dodge for horse-trading—or attempted horse-trading."

The man shook his head and looked around. "Horse-trading? I never made a horse at my life." His expression suddenly became almost frightened. He was young—about twenty-three or twenty-four, with about four days' growth of beard on his jaw—big and well-built. The frightened look was a bad

fit on his face. "At least," he added, "he did as I am remember."

"What's your name?"

The eyes were fixed on Matt with an almost pleading expression at first. The head was shaking slowly. "I . . . don't . . . know . . . My head feels all full of brains . . . I can't think straight. . ."

Questions like "Where did you come from, what is your business, where are you taking to?" went all unanswered with a shake of the head.

Finally Matt decided that the man was trying to trickery, he had lost his memory. The blow on the jaw from Matt's fist, followed immediately by the blow on the head from the rock, had confused his wit; memory had gone with them. You wouldn't charge a man with something he did not remember doing; but you wouldn't leave a man out in this country, either, knowing he had no home. Wherever he was, wherever he had done, wherever way Matt looked at it, he had to take the man back to Dodge.

By the time Matt was ready to pull out, the man had apparently recovered—physically, at any rate. Matt made him move, then spring up behind him. Riding is a matter for a space and then a walk, he reckoned they would make Dodge maybe two hours after sunset.

Matt sighed, patted his legs. He'd gone out after the Clancy hoodlums, wanted the marauder, armed robbery and a few other lesser crimes. They were known to have been in the district. He had drawn blank, had nearly got himself robbed of his horse, and now had a case of horse-trading on his hands, as well as a broken shell.

His attention was drawn by the last, deliberate movement of six or seven valises, piling high up on broad steps over a spot beyond the crest of the rocky hill which they were approaching, away from the plain below. It could mean that the birds were waiting to make sure a coyote was dead before descending for their feast, or a wary horse, or several of my sort, and a man. . .

Over the crest, about a hundred yards off the trail, Matt saw what the birds was occupying—and the reason why they were still playing tail and not standing on the crease leaving the river trail in clear trail beds.

A middle-aged lay dead. Standing over it were two men, their horses now by. They saw Matt almost as soon as he saw them, and they stood tense as his case grew. He stopped his horse when he was



"You'd better make sure he is, Marshal."

street ten yards from them, and the man who had been standing furthest back stopped forward. He wore a sheriff's star, and he smiled to Matt, taking as his marshal's badge.

"Oh, there, Marshal! Mine's Jim Bennoch—sheriff of Tulare County. See you got him, don't?"

"Morning?" Matt said. "Got what?"

"Tom Clancy. He and Tom here—his uncle's Tom, am surprised both of them just today evening. Can Clancy get away, but we shot that man's horse from under him, and took him. During the night he got away from us."

Matt added, "The young man behind him fitted the description of the younger of the Clancy brothers, but the description he had to work on would have fitted seven out of ten young fellows, just as the description of the older Clancy would have fitted seven out of ten men of thirty years or so."

The sheriff came a few more steps forward, smiling exuberantly. "I guess I'd like to be the one to ride him in, Marshal."

"The Marshal Dikes, Marshal Min Dikes?"

"Indeed of you, Marshal. Dodge City, eh? I'll say we have, eh, Don?"

"Don't say."

"Like I was saying, Marshal, I'd kinda like to ride him in, especially seeing as we got him last—shot his horse from under him. If you hadn't picked him up we soon would have today. Mine without a horse, without a gun, we'd gonna go far as the country. He kinda belongs to us, wouldn't you say?"

"You could put it like that," said Matt.

"And then there's the reward. Federal marshals ain't entitled to take an even-day. That right? But there ain't neither to me and Tom here claiming the five thousand dollars each of three years put on their heads. See what I mean, Marshal?"

They said, "That he hasn't?"

"Sure is. Tom here as a dead-eye with a Wier shaver. Got the animal plumb as the eye."

"Surprised he didn't shoot the Clancy, then. Saved you a lot of trouble. The poster say the reward is for dead or alive."

Bennoch's smile spread across his features again. "Course he's kinda safe-headed, Marshal."

"What's the difference? He know the Clancys have a deal with the rope, didn't he?" Matt chafed himself in the saddle slightly. Tom Clancy was clamped forward slightly, and Matt was surprised there had been no reaction from him.



Mar's men rose up suddenly under Benzo's gun hand

Benzo said, "You treated him rough, Marshal. He looks like that since you put him on the saddle."

"Like what?"

"What, man's you came late right I could see he was kinda half-conscious. Guess you broke-sacked him on the head too good, eh, Marshal?"

"I'm taking him into Dodge," said Mar, "where he'll answer a charge of attempted horse-stealing. I guess he must have passed out while we've been riding. Back here I can't see how he's sleeping."

Benzo's gun suddenly appeared in his hand, and Tom's immediately followed suit.

"I'm sorry to have to do this, Marshal, but these five-thousand dollars is jugging my share. Keep your hands up high. Tom, go get him off the horse."

Tom stepped forward, crouching, and pulled the half-conscious man to the ground.

Mar's eyes were black. What Benzo said was true. Federal marshals could not chase reward money, but sheriffs could. Merely a could be said

that Benzo and Tom had done the major part of the work in capturing the man. It was true also that no warned, horseless man would not get far in this type of country. Weighted up like that, Benzo and Tom were entitled to the reward.

But the appearance of the guns sharpened Mar's perception, and he noticed one thing that made something out of Benzo's argument, and a lot out of something that was happening to grow in Mar's mind. In the normal course of events the thing he had suddenly noticed would have passed unremarked. A man was apt to lose track of right and left when he was doing something. What was right if you faced one way was left when you faced another....

Benzo, still smiling, came slowly towards Mar, keeping him covered. Tom was dragging the half-conscious man towards where both men looked mood.

"I'll take your gun, Marshal, just in case you might try to take him back. Then why don't you ride back to Dodge all safe and quiet as if nothing had





happened! And don't think me hardly of me, Marshal. Five thousand dollars. . . ."

Smiling up at Matt, Blamock reached up to take the gun from its holster.

First of expecting blowups, Matt's foot came up suddenly under Blamock's gun hand. The man gave a cry of pain as the gun went sailing into the air, and fell backwards.

Tom turned at the cry and fled. If Matt had still been in the saddle, it would have been the end for him, but as his feet exploded upwards, he used the momentum to throw himself backwards off the horse's back. As he hit the ground his gun was in his hand, and a bullet was on its way to hammer Tom's flesh his grasp.

Before either of the men could recover, Matt was on his feet, and had pronounced himself so that he had them back falling down the barrel of his Colt.

The man who had lost his memory was recovering again, and pulling himself to his feet.

"Blamock!" he was saying. "Blamock? That's my name! I'm Sheriff of Tatum County. . . . I. . . ." His hand went to his head, and then to the left side where his Sheriff's badge should have been, but wasn't. His eyes lost the vacant, far-away expression in his mind completely cleared and he took in the scene before him. The man glared at Matt's badge, eyes not lowered now the man who had called himself Blamock whose he lay on the ground, and then was still half dazed, taking his scratched hand.

Matt said, "Fed well enough to collect their gun?"

"Sure," he said. He asked no questions, but in his gaze Tom he said, "You didn't get away with it, Chancy, did' I told you the law wouldn't let you go."

"Glad every one did," smiled Tom.

"That is a great day for me, Marshal. . . ."

"Dillon," said Matt, introducing himself for the second time. "Matt Dillon of Dodge City."



where I hid him, but I held my, and managed to . . . or did I? There's just a little part I can't remember. But we got 'em, and that's all that counts."

Before Jim Hancock left Dodge the next day, having had his head wound dressed by Doc Adams, Max encouraged his chase to the west. "You must come and see Jimmie and me when we're settled, Marshal," he said. "I sure wish there was a way for you to shoot in the west."

Max smiled. He wished so, too, but that was the way of it. He said, "Good-bye! You're young, and you've heard one of the biggest outlaws in the territory. Don't let it go to your head!"

But he didn't tell the young man of his escape at horse-stealing, nor did he tell him of the sheriff's badge the older Clancy had previously taken from him earlier and hurriedly placed in his vest when Max came upon them—placed hurriedly in his vest on the wrong side.

"I gotta think in my head. These two Clancys must have chugged me. No time to ask you how you happened along—I'll get caught in a big slice of luck. Now Jimmie and me can get started . . . the reward money, you know."

Max mounted the new outlaws on one of their horses. The real Jim Hancock mounted the other.

Max said, "We'll take them into Dodge. I reckon my rifle there are more likely to hold them than yours, Marshal."

"You're right, I guess. All I got is a wooden stick in back of my office."

With hands tied and feet tied with rope lashed under the horse's belly, neither Clancy was able to give trouble on the way to Dodge. Hancock rode at their side. "I like after these raps for the past few days. First I found their tracks, where they'd reached nearly the deserted golden-bellies. I moved in to another 'belongings, and then dashed if they didn't turn up just as I was having the talk with the landlady. They jumped me, tried to make me off



"We'll make them into Dodge!"

*The*  
**WILD  
BLACK  
STALLION**





# THE WILD BLACK STALLION





THE WILD BLACK STALLION

CHAPTER XXII THE WILD BLACK STALLION











# THE WILD BLACK STALLION





# Confederate GREY

The bowing doors of the Lady Grey swung flew open. They nearly left their hinges, flung into violent action by the exit of two corpses, who were leaving the saloon so fast that their feet found no contact with the ground. They flew over the headboard and landed in a cloud of dust at the foot of the wooden steps leading to it from the rear.

They ran immediately to their feet and moved away from the Lady Grey as fast as their shod feet would allow. Before the swinging doors had finished their farewell, a third party came rushing through them headlong.

He was perhaps a little more haggard than the other two, in that Marshal Matt Dillon happened to be passing at the time and noted in a cushion. A leaner man than Matt would have been, except off the headboard and into the dust of the moon by the saloon. As it was, he staggered to the edge of the headboard under the force of the impact, cradled himself, and tried to control the revolver in order to ascertain the cause of his abrupt departure from an establishment which, as a rule, customers were reluctant to leave.

But the man, a heavy Irish laborer as the newly laid railroad, put one frightened glance towards the still swinging doors, and then high-tailed it backwards, probably making for New York and the next best look to Ireland.





**Abstract**

Must enjoyed the chance to find a man as tall and as wide as me on the shore here as he was standing with his back to me, facing the swimming customers billions of miles away.

He was saying, "Say more Turkish want to call me a Turkish traitor."

The place was a shambles. Tables were overturned and broken, chairs lay in splinters on the floor, the big mirror behind the counter was smashed, there were men out cold in various positions. Those who were not getting themselves to their feet, their eyes still with that vacant, lost look of one whom one has come into contact with a large, hard, deadly swirling gas. Of the barman, only the top of his head and one wide, apprehensive eye could be seen, peering over the top of the counter.

The big man took his back-to-back view a grey military hat, of the type worn by the man who rode with the immortal John Stuart. His vest and shirt were a nondescript dark colour, but his trousers, tucked into knee-bushes, were of the real Confederate grey cotton and cut. It was ten years since General Lee had surrendered at Appomattox, yet the man's look no worse fit even than if their owner had just ridden in off a parade the Emperor.

There was only one thing for Max to do. He slipped up to the next and tapped him on the shoulder. The stranger swung round, fighting, but Max had been expecting this, and his fist was already travelling upwards towards the square jaw that suddenly received it.

The Marshal hit his man for pointblank on his forehead, but he reached with a certain amount of satisfaction—stared with a certain amount of surprise that the big man slumped unresistingly to the floor. Then he bent down, and, snoring all his strength, heaved the stranger upon his shoulder and walked with him with some difficulty back to his office.

By the time Morrell locked the cell door on him, the man had gone round. He took no further notice as a quick glance warned him. Then he said, "That wasn't a fair match, Mister Lawrence."

That settled. "Don't I know it?" he said. "But I had to prevent any more damage to his and look. You weren't in the mood for work." He looked at the broken chair on his floorplan as he spoke. "You believe she was all over town?"

The press should be freed. "I work with John Sargent's family and church," he said. "I was con-

man when I first forked a horse with Job, and to ride with him and the men he led through those years was something no man could ever forget—something to be mighty proud of always.”

Man nodded. “You’re right, there.”

The big man reached his hat lying on the bank at his side, and looked down at his trousers. “There are all I’ve got left—the trousers and the hat and the remnants. The Yankees confiscated our things, all our money went in Confederate scrip. My brother and father were killed in the war, and my mother died from the grief of it all. A man’s got a right to his horse and his rifle and his memories, and my dear old Yankee that calls Henry inside a Johnny Reb got what’s coming to him.”

“So I’ve seen,” said Man, his eyes holding a wealth of sympathy and homesickness at the memory of the painful inevitability of what he had seen of Henry inside. “If the whole of Job Smear’s command had been as big and as strong as you, why, I guess he might have ridden right through to the Canadian frontier and back, and then from west to west across the country.”

Inside coming up. It was during when the war broke out, that made him about thirty now. He looked older with the lines war had etched on his face, but in his eyes Man could imagine of an unimpaired spirit and a courage that would ride high and lead his men into battle. But there was a cold loneliness, too.

Man sighed. “Off-hand, I figure you’ve done about two hundred dollars’ worth of damage. That’s got to be paid for.”

“I’m a saddle-wrang cowboy, Marshal. What money I earn I spend. I’ll pay it—only you’ll have to let me work for it.”

It was arranged that Inside would work around the town during the day, and would report back to Man at sundown to spend each night in jail until the damage was paid off.

Quint Jager gave him some work in the blacksmith shop, and Fritz Haggan, who was always being pressed to do odd jobs for which he had no time, put some work in his way also.

Man had used his man, and he knew that until the money had been paid Henry would not break his parole. But there was one thing.

“If there’s more fighting, Henry,” Man told him the first day, “the law will come down on you hard.”

“I’ll try and be good, Marshal, but I’m not giving

my parole not to use my gun on some darn Yankee that kills for us.”

“Well, I’ve warned you.”

“Just one thing, Marshal. In my holster on my horse there’s my working weapons. I only wear these I got on when I’m at town. They’re the last pair I got.”

In his working trousers the next day, Henry inside left the jail and started work. The word had gone round Dodge, and no one attempted to start anything with him, partly out of their respect for Man, but more because of the stories of the beatings-up he had heeded out, which had lost nothing in the telling. Henry didn’t wear a gun, so that the respect paid to him by the tough citizens of the busy town of Dodge was all the more remarkable.

Then the thing that Man hoped wouldn’t happen did happen. Samuel B. Remson rode into town. Sam Remson’s three sons would have been twenty years old, eighteen years old and sixteen years old respectively had not a shell from a Confederate gun destroyed his farmhouse in Maryland at the beginning of the battle of Antietam, killing the three of them and his young wife as well. The end of the war had not yet the end of Sam’s deep hatred of all Northerners. Man knew that now, ten years after the end of the war, Sam’s bitter hatred was as violent as ever.

Sam was a man a year or maybe two years over fifty, as strong as a bull, and with a nature made hard and unfeeling by what he had suffered. Now he owned one of the biggest cattle spreads in the territory, and could not have sold postage every hour much money he had—not to the nearest hundred thousand dollars, anyway. He had nothing else to live for, except work and his ranch. He made little use of all the money he made, was a tough employer, a hard bargainer, and an unmerciful creditor to those who had the misfortune to get into his debt.

The first Man knew of his arrival in town was the morning Henry quit on his Confederate parole in front of his working trousers.

“What working money, Henry?” Man asked, smiling.

“It’s a working day all right, Marshal, but it’s a fighting day too, from what I hear, and if I’m fighting, this guy is my fighting colour. Quint Jager told me last night a man called Sam Remson had just ridden into town. Sooner the war is well on for fight for real, only he’s a Yankee and he takes respect from the

Sauck. Quast said it seems he heard about me being in Dodge. Two weeks ago I showed out of the Lady Gay side for him, by all accounts—and this Sam Ransom just rode in, Quast said, to settle my feud."

Mart put the boys of the mill close back on the nail in the wall, without leaving Henry out.

"Here, Henry," he said, "you and Ransom leave town you say right where you are, I know this man—his hat's a disease. He'll chase you into a square and then gun you down."

Henry bravely smiled faintly. "Get captured over in the war," he said, "but the Union couldn't keep me as jail. Neither can you, Marshal." He rounded behind his men, and then ran back.

Mart left his office to find Sam Ransom and order him out of town for the sake of law and order. As the Dodge House, he discovered that Sam was still in his room. He went up, and knocked on the door. Sam's deep voice told him to enter. Mart opened the door. Sam was sitting on the edge of the big brass-bedded bed.

Mart said, "Now, I'm going to have to ask . . ."

That was as far as he got. A gun butt clattered down on his head and he clumped to the floor.

*Four men dragged Mart and Sam out of the wagon.*

When he came to and his mind had cleared, he saw that he was tied hand and foot and lying on the bottom of a wagon. Lying by his side, and bound also, was Sam Ransom.

Before he could speak, the wagon lurched to a halt. Four men came to the back of the wagon, dragged Mart and Sam out, and on the ropes leading their fire. Mart knew none of the men, neither did he recognize any of the other eight, who sat their horses silently as he and Sam were helped to mount two spare horses. The men had no need to speak—the muscles of their guns trained on the captives spoke for them.

The run was high, and from a Mart judged he had been out the wagon over two hours. They were in undulating, rocky hill country, which Mart reckoned to be well to the north of Dodge, and the wagon had halted at a dark at the track. Once Mart and Sam were in their saddles, the wagon turned eastward, while the twelve men and their two prisoners continued along the trail going north and checking him the hills.

By the middle of the afternoon, riding sometimes on a canyon and sometimes on a wash, they were among higher hills and deeper valleys. A further halt in





John's riding brought them to a halt among the hills, at the far side of which were two round-bottomed shoals, behind which on the side of the almost perpendicular hill Matt could see two dark ridges, which told him they were at an old mine-working.

There had been little or no talking among their captives, and now, when Matt had begun to speak to Sam, a gun was pushed hard and painfully into the small of his back, and he was told to keep his mouth buttoned.

At the shoals they were pulled from their horses and pushed into the water. Their hands were unbound, and two of the men were left in the shack with them, guns held ready.

In a minute later the door was kicked open, and a dark-set, bull-necked man with a long black mustache came in. Sam gave a start as the man stood there at the doorway flanked by two other men, with guns, and glared at him.

"Calhoun?" Sam's voice held defiance, surprise.

"Did you remember me, Captain Ramsey?" The emphasis on the word "Captain" was a mixture of contempt, dislike and sarcasm. The man took a pace into the shack. "I won't waste words, Ramsey. You're here and three hundred thousand dollars in

gold are paid for me. You'll send a certain amount to one of your men, and an authorization to collect the gold. I'll tell you where he is to deliver it. You'll do this within the next two hours. If you don't do it of your own free will, we'll find ways of making you." Calhoun's eyes reached to Matt. He smiled again. "Couldn't be better. We got the Town Marshal that night with our hands on him, so you ain't got the law first to come to your aid, Ramsey. You got two hours to make up your mind, unless you make it up already."

"I have," snapped Sam. "Go to the devil!"

"You'll be taking defiance in a while!"

Calhoun turned on his heel and left the shack. The two men who had been in the boat when he arrived went with him.

Matt went to the door-weathered window, and saw that there were remained on guard outside. He turned to Sam. "What's it all about, Sam? What's Calhoun?"

The hard, leaner look that was always present on Sam Ramsey's face now had contempt added to it. "He was my superior during the war," he said. "We never liked each other, but we were in some rough spots together—the first Bull Run, the Shenandoah





*Max watched the Winchester from its dead as he fell.*

"I never thought, after all these years . . ." Suddenly he made a run for the door, throwing it open like a bomb.

"Sam!" Max yelled. It looked as if the man was asking for death. Sam's always had taken the three-punch by surprise. He flung one of them to the ground. After that one, poked under the Winchester the second guard was bringing up, and clamped his two wrists between the man's eyes, wrenching the Winchester from his hand as he fell.

The third guard fired at Sam. Max swung the butt of the gun at the man's head, and he went down like a rock. Sam, a Colt in his hand and a belt of ammunition slung from his shoulder, was running with a leap towards a small mound that threw shade from the shade. Here there was a cluster of rocks which turned the mound into a miniature fort.

Max was sliding the ammunition belt from the unconscious body of the man he had cladded when the others burst out from the hazy of the two bare bullets may pass him, and his the dart at his feet as he turned to run towards the mound.

At the bottom of the slope lay Sam, his face relaxed again. He had a wound just above the knee, where the bullet fired by the guard had hit him.

Max dropped and lifted him up the short slope towards the shelter of the rocks, turning to let the Winchester rest under his arm. The shots were not on sight, but they were close enough to bring the pursuit to a halt, allowing him enough time to get him and himself behind cover.

They were in a good position. The ground dominated the rest of the hole, which stretched back over for a direct attack on the mound, long clear of rocks and scrub, and open.

It was a good place to withstand a siege—if only their ammunition had not been limited and they had food and water. Sam sat, getting his wounds, and peering towards the shade behind which Calloway and his men had taken cover. "It's like Fortitude being all over again—only this time I've got the Confederate position—remembered, but behind good cover. Heck, these rocks would do it Fortitudeburg, Max!"

Max said, "Well, if Calloway tries to do what the Union General Burnside did, flip around attack after frontal attack at us, we'll lose him just as Lee lost Burnside." He smiled slowly. "If our ammunition holds out."

Calloway's men came to them from behind the

smaller of the two boats, which was nearer to them. "All we got to do, Ramsey, is to keep you there. We can surround you. You're outnumbered and out-gunned. When that train driving you mad, maybe you'll feel different. We got plenty of time—three days, five days, seven days . . . as long as you like. We can wait for the haul of money you're going to pay over to us."

"It's right," Matt said. "Everything—except these rocks—is on our side."

A boat appeared in the wake of the chink. Sam fired, and a hat that had been pinned out on the end of a stick went flying through the air.

"Save your ammunition," said John. "They'll try all those old tricks to make us use up our ammunition."

The men dipped behind the western hills, and Matt could see two or three men working their way toward the entrance to the house, out of range. The darkness of night would be the most dangerous time, unless he could think of a way of making use of it.

The early twilight in the basin began to deepen. Without losses how could they make a run for it? What chance had they on foot against at least a dozen mounted men? Matt couldn't remember being in a tougher spot, with the odds so heavily against him. Here, where wounded leg had now withered, couldn't even walk.

Then, from somewhere in the house, where Matt judged that by this time Galloway's men had taken up their positions, there came the sound of shots. When the echoes died away, there was silence for a few moments. And then, out of the narrow pass, accompanied by a wild whoop, came three horsemen in a headlong gallop.

Sam gasped, and Matt turned himself. The galloping horsemen were led by a large figure wearing a light-gray hat and trousers of Confederate



The galloping horsemen were led by a figure in Confederate gray



*Cutaway was hung in the ground*

gray ruckled his skinning-knee-boots. In his right hand, held out boldly in front of him, smoky lantern, the odd, ever-smiling Madril of a curdly white-haired dwarfed dwarfed to all who came within the life of his nest.

Behind Henry's shoulder, whispering his way joyously towards the two shades, from which now came a flood of shots, rode Quin and Frenck Haggan. Quin was firing his Winchester Indian-baiter in the gallop, and Frenck held his Colt ready.

Before they were fifty yards from the shades, some of the men behind the buildings broke and ran. Many sympathized with them, for the mighty Henry swung his great horse behind that shade was enough to make the heart run.

Sam watched, his mouth half-open in some amazement. Henry's voice, yelling the hot war-cry of

a cowboy on his leading-charger, echoed round the hills.

Sam said, his voice having a boundless quality of awe about it, "I heard that shout once before . . . when John Stuart's smoky-colored rode right round behind McClellan's army, playing havoc behind our lines. Confoundin' guy . . . that's what he's wearin'!"

The rest behind the shades was now complete. Men—all except one—were standing in all directions to get away from the threat of the shade. The exception—Cutaway himself—hung himself in Henry's horse, and was caught by the immense animal's deep, barrel chest and hung like a rag doll in the ground.

Henry, Quin and Frenck watched up the rest of them into an angle of the almost perpendicular hillside.

Back as Dodge as dawn was coming up, Doc Adams finished crossing Sam Bennett's wound. "Another couple of hours," Doc said, "and I'll be getting out my own to take it off. You're lucky, Sam."

"I guess maybe I am—and, of all people, I got a Johnny Reb to thank for it. You know, Doc, he





"Call me early, Marshall," said Henry as he stood the cell.

come looking for me—discovered from the clerk at the Dodge House that Miss Wilson had called . . ."

"I know," said Doc. "The man's been full of it. He found your room at the Dodge House in a chamber, met a boy who'd seen some men carrying out two large bundles wrapped in blankets from back of the hotel—bundles which they loaded on to a wagon—and gone down, picking up Quist, Hager and Finsen Haggan on the way."

Sam's expression was still hard. "How do you go getting for a man who's saved your life, Doc?"

Doc looked at him over his glasses. "I don't," he said. "I just thank providence for such men."

"That's what I want," said Sam Houston, almost reproachfully.

Over in Matt's office, too, Henry, Quist and Finsen stopped standing aside of nothing.

"There's just one thing, Henry," said Matt. "How in vacation did you get out of the cell?"

Henry grinned. "Forgive me tell you, Marshall. In my head, as well as my busy pants, I got my self wrapped. With that at my hand, and my own full stomach, through the bars of the cell, whip, it was as easy as leaving the Chinese army at Fredericksburg for me to lift down your little old bunch of keys from the wall in the cell." He finished his coffee and entered the cell. "Say, Marshall," he said, "only got couple of hours' sleep-time left, but call me early. I got a falling's week ahead of me, and I reckon that by the end of it I'll have earned enough to think paying off the score. Guess it's time I moved on out of Dodge."

Matt smiled. He said, "I guess we'll all be ready to see you go, Henry."





# Gunsmoke

TELEVISION'S  
FAMOUS MARSHAL  
IN  
NEW ADVENTURES

